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LILITH

SPRING 1995

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LILITH is named for the legendary predecessor of Eve who insisted on equality with Adam. After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, the Holy One created a woman, also from the earth, and called her Lilith. Lilith said: "We are equal because we both come from the earth. . . ."

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FROM THE EDITOR

LILITH is made possible by the generosity of supporters who make tax-deductible contributions to the work of the magazine; To the names of recent donors appearing on this page we are proud to add the Helena Rubinstein Foundation, which has just made a grant to help underwrite our internship and fellowship programs, providing work and learning opportunities for college students and recent graduates at LILITH.

And now. . . hair. Hair's so intimate, so personal, potentially so beautiful. No other integument—fingernail clippings, let's say—would have been made into a brooch, as the Victorians did, commemorating a departed beloved. And nothing other than a lock of hair could ever, imaginably, end up in a locket. As we've been preparing this issue, I've been trying to stick with memories of washing my childhood hair in rain water warmed on top of a wood stove in our summer cottage on Lake Winnipeg, or about letting my four-year-old ringlets dry in the beneficent, clear prairie sunshine.

But my hair thoughts are not all so sunny. Visiting my mother, I discover that, with the ubiquitous short-cropped hair that's the nursing-home style, I have to stare closely at all the elderly snowy heads to find the one I am so anxiously and so tenderly seeking. I eschew lockets, but I do keep (in my mother's cedar chest) the pelts of her young woman's mahogany brown hair—a braid, a bun—which she'd had cut and styled to wear as hairpieces in her dramatic thirties and forties. These hairy mementos are a creepy parallel to what my mother's Alzheimer's disease creates—an imitation of life. The hair—so human—looks and feels lifelike, and but it's just an emblem of the vibrant woman on whom it used to grow.

In this unusual issue of LILITH you'll find both memory and desire, plus brave analysis and true confessions. It's a treat!

Susan Weidman Schneider

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Now you can talk to LILITH by e-mail. Our address is LilithMag@aol.com.

LETTERS

OLOCAUST MEMOIR

am pleased that LILITH shared my "Simple Story" with readers [Women's Holocaust Memoirs, Winter '94], nowever Susan Schnur's editing altered meaning of two sentences.

"My father and I never grew close" is an accurate description. It's true, we n't have as open a communication as I uld have liked. For example, when I ught him the picture of me standing with arm around my mother's *matzayva* avestone), I anticipated sitting down with n and talking about my mother. However, feelings of sorrow and guilt and my lings of abandonment were too painful d frightening to communicate. In rospect I wish desperately we could have red feelings, but that was not to be.

Second, "So I tried for many years to ieve that it was America, not my father, t broke my heart." When I first came to nerica, many of my relatives sang me a ddish song that had the punch line, *"a g af Columbus's medina"* ("a plague on lumbus's land"). I had many appointments here, but more pleasures. ost of the time I thought of the Jews who yed in Europe, and felt that "there, but for grace of God, go I."

Sherry Gold
Teaneck, NJ

N LILITH'S 18TH...

just received the Winter 1994 issue of LILITH and commend you on it. I have photo-copied the Huppah Quilting Bee piece and will pass that along. We do nething similar in our community for the pies. A group of women get together—ch taking a square—and, based on a me such as the holidays, Jewish women, ., put together a baby quilt. It is always a treasure for the family and a wonderful experience for the women working on it.

Susan Berrin
Victoria, CANADA

The Huppah Quilt featured in LILITH Winter 1994 was photographed by Alan Klein

BAT MITZVAH REDUX

I missed your call for bat mitzvah experiences last spring. But I'd like to add another permutation to your collection. I was raised in an Orthodox family, educated in a Talmud Torah, and was a rebellious feminist before it was fashionable. I chose a secular Jewish husband who had not been bar mitzvah. In 1985, after 41 years of marriage, we decided to study together and have a joint bar and bat mitzvah at the Worship and Study Minyan at Harvard Radcliffe Hillel. I was not trying to be equal to men. My husband, however, was trying to catch up to me and make our "mixed marriage" one of equals. The occasion was one of the high points in our marriage, a message to our children, grandchildren, and friends about how much our Jewishness means to us. It might be important for women to know that the possibility exists and is well worth the effort.

Sylvia Rothchild
Chestnut Hill, MA

"Adult Bat Mitzvah: A Revolution for Women and Synagogues" in LILITH [Fall 1989] can be ordered for $5, from LILITH, 250 W.57 St., #2432, New York, NY 10107.

Poetry Alert!

While LILITH will continue to receive poetry submissions year round, please know that poetry editor Alicia Ostriker will read poems twice a year, in February and September. Poets can expect to hear about their submissions within eight weeks after the reading period.

TELL THE MEN?

You really made me angry! You may honestly believe you represent the views of the organized Jewish community when you stated "Jewish meetings are where patriarchy lives on" [Winter 1994].

This is not the case where I live. In my Jewish community there is a "complete equality of participation, access and leadership." Four past presidents have been women. Over the past years our women have been responsible, variously, for Jewish Education, Synagogue and Ritual, Finance, Chevra Kadisha and other committees. They have not walked away from community involvement and have been welcomed and respected for their dedication and commitment by both men and women. They do not know "the secret signs and signals of the underdog."

This is a small Jewish community with only one synagogue. It is linked with the United Synagogue of America and is egalitarian in practice and philosophy. The members of this community, both men and women, have more pressing issues than the ones you chose to whine about in your editorial. Get real!

Gladys Rose
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Rose is president of Congregation Agudas Israel. LILITH has reported several times on the statistical evidence that women's power in a Jewish community is in inverse proportion to the community's size. See page 40 of this issue for more data.

Did your Jewish marriage end in a Catholic annulment?

LILITH has been informed that an observant Catholic cannot marry a formerly married Jew unless his or her partner's previous marriage is annulled by the Catholic Church. Many Jews are now surprised to find themselves learning a lot about this aspect of canon law—particularly Jewish women whose Jewish ex-husbands now want to marry Catholic women. Have you had your Jewish-Jewish marriage annulled by the Catholic Church? If so, and if you're willing to share your experience, please drop a note to Susan Schnur at LILITH, 250 W. 57 St., #2432, New York, NY 10107.

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KOL ISHAH

"WOMAN'S VOICE." TRADITIONALLY, THE VOICE OF THE JEWISH WOMAN WA NOT TO BE HEARD IN PUBLIC, LEST IT AROUSE MEN. NO MORE. THESE PAGE ARE MEANT FOR NEWS ABOUT JEWISH WOMEN, IN OUR OWN STRONG VOICES

RUSSIAN WOMEN: STATESIDE

Many waves of Jewish emigrants from the Former Soviet Union have landed on American coasts. Their educational backgrounds, intentions and destinations differed, but they all hoped to obtain the valuable right to be themselves, professing what they believed in, doing what they were good at, and living the life they chose by themselves.

Inga Aglitskaya

I myself was a journalist in Moscow, working for the scientific newspaper *Radical*. Since coming with my entire family to the United States in 1992, I have become a manager at AT&T's multicultural marketing department as well as working closely with the New York Association for New Americans. This is my first attempt to introduce my fellow countrywomen to American readers.

Dina Zuckerman came to New York City in 1990, leaving her friends and family in Moscow. A biochemist in the Former Soviet Union, she cleaned houses and volunteered until getting a job as a biochemist at the Cornell Medical Center.

"There was no women's issue in the FSU. Equal rights were declared. And you indeed could see women constructing roads and working hard with hazardous materials. Women even could be elected to the highest legislative structures, but only for sitting on a level with men as dummies. They could be heads where they worked and at the same time slaves to housekeeping: hunting for food; bringing up children; cooking and cleaning. They never had a rest. I've never seen a Russian family in which the husband and wife share family duties like Americans do."

Marina Kovaleva came from Leningrad to New York in 1978 with her husband, Sergey, and their 8-year-old daughter Rina. Since then she has helped 23 relatives, a lot of friends and Jewish dissidents come to the U.S.

"Everybody said it was impossible for a Russian Jewish lady to get a museum curator position in the U.S., but I finally got a position at the Brooklyn Museum. Three years later I lost my position just when I felt secure and was hoping to work all my years at the Brooklyn Museum."

"That was when I decided to start my own business, where my future depends only on what I do. I started taking Russians and showing them American sights. As a result we became tour operators not just for Russians but for Americans traveling to Eastern Europe. We were the first tour to show Jewish sights. Even at the time of the highest oppression. Now, we take hundreds of groups to the Former Soviet Union, provide them with kosher food and the chance to meet Jewish families and Jewish activists."

Mila Kazimrsky left Odessa, Ukraine in 1979 with her parents, husband and 8-year-old daughter Irina. Before coming to the U.S. she was a philologist and worked as a school teacher. She washed floors and stairs in Italy on her way to America

"Everybody told me that the most popular and wanted profession in America was accounting. I never liked it, but obediently entered the course. I studied nine months, and sobbed each of those days. I had about 35 interviews and was not hired anywhere. One man who finally hired me confessed that he saw immediately that I am not good at such a job, but he always dreamed about the blond working in h office. Now I work as a real estate age This is mine."

"My greatest discovery in this country its motto: 'It is never too late.' Huge shi full of old ladies traveling all around t world! Colleges and universities where y can take any courses in spite of your ag Singing, dancing, painting, no matter wh you did before! All my life I longed f creative activity, feeling somethi unknown in myself. Once I opened a do in a studio where people were bus modeling and said, 'Let me join you. I love to.' They laughed: 'O.K., come ove Take some clay.' Now I am displaying in gallery."

"I do regret that I was not born here a had not grown up in this country as a fr person. On the other hand, there is som advantage in taking the opportunity to li more than one life."

—Inga Aglitska

Recent immigrants who need help c contact Pinchas Berger, ACSW, Director Program Development and Speci Projects of the Jewish Board of Family a Children's Services at (212) 632-4662

ADLER V. THE QUEEN: 5 PARENT SUE ONTARIO

The 10,000 students of Ontario's Jewish day schools returned school this year knowing that fiv Toronto parents are leading a thre decade struggle to win publi funding for private denomination schools. The five, in conjunction with t Ontario Jewish Association for Equity Education, are asking that the provinc fund the secular curriculum in Ontario 500 private schools of all faiths—Jewis Protestant, Mennonite—just as it presentl does for Roman Catholics. In July of 199 the Court of Appeal in Ontario (t wealthiest and most populous of Canada 10 provinces) found that the provinci

vernment's refusal to fund nominational schools other than the man Catholic separate school system *is* nstitutional. With $170 million in vernment funding at stake (Ontario's ucation budget currently totals $8 billion), five parents have filed leave to appeal the ision to the Supreme Court of Canada—country's final arbiter of justice.

Unlike the situation in the U.S., where doctrine of separating church and state ans no direct government subsidies for vate schools, Canada has no laws bidding this. Today Canada is multi-ethnic. And aside from Ontario, virtually every province and territory provides some form of funding for parochial schools. For Jews, this translates into partial provincial assistance in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Quebec. The majority of Canada's 35,000 Jews, however, live in Ontario, where fees for Jewish schools range from $6,000 to $10,000 per year.

The inequitable nature of various court rulings goaded Susie Adler and her co-plaintiffs, Paula Kezwer, Riky Young, Marcy Rapp and Mark Grossman, into suing the Ontario Minister of Health in 1991, alleging a violation of Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Canada's equivalent of the U.S. Constitution).

Adler says the suit is a demonstration of the strength of Ontario's multicultural fabric. "It seems to me that the Ontario public is strengthened and enriched by the existence of alternative educational systems such as the Jewish day school system. This education instills in children a self-confidence regarding their heritage and a sensitivity to the heritage and tradition of others," she argues in her affidavit.

—Gil Kezwer

WOMEN FIGHTER PILOTS

When the boys in Alice Miller's high school class in Hod Hasharon, Israel, were summoned to qualification exams for the Israeli Air Force, Miller was not even considered, despite holding a civilian pilot license, because Israel bars women from combat.

Miller took the army to the Israeli Supreme Court in November of 1994, charging sex discrimination and demanding that combat roles be opened to women, according to THE NEW YORK TIMES. The case is the first time the army has been ordered to explain its ban on women in combat. Although Israel is the only country that drafts women as well as men, Miller is quoted as saying that "There's a myth of the Israeli woman soldier fighting in the front and doing exactly what men do. But if you take a deeper look, you see that most women in the army serve coffee to their commanders."

Manpower shortages and pressure to expand opportunities for women have led to an increased variety of positions offered to women. Many now serve as infantry, gunnery instructors, flight controllers, operations officers and radar operators in front-line units, aircraft mechanics and explosives experts. But they are still barred from combat. No formal reasons are given, although military and Government officials cite a concern that women might be taken prisoner and raped. "There are women who are assaulted in our army, too," Miller said. "But the feeling is that if Arabs do this to our women, that's terrible. It's a protective reaction."

"WE MEN ARE ON THE FRONT LINE. IF WOMEN ARE WITH US, WHOM ARE WE PROTECTING?"

Senior officers say it is impractical to invest in long-term training programs for women because they serve only 21 months of regular duty, spend little time in the reserves and are likely to lose time because of pregnancy and childbirth. In contrast, men serve three years of regular service and can be called to the reserves until they are 50. But Miller says she is ready to serve the full five-year term and reserve duty required of pilots, and plan her family accordingly.

The combat ban against women represents public perception of women in Israel. Dr. Reuven Gal, a former chief army psychologist, explains, "There's a sense that we men are on the front line defending our homes and our families. Women are the symbol of the family, of the children, of the next generation. If they are with us at the front, what are we fighting for, whom are we protecting?"

Neta Ziv Goldman, a lawyer for the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, which is representing Miller, said, "The fact that men go to combat and women keep the home fires burning has a deep impact on the way our society views women. Society will look at them differently if they have a chance to participate as men do in what is viewed as one of the most important tasks here: risking your life in the defense of your country."

—adapted from the New York Times
by Robin Beth Schaer

WOMEN LEAD CUBAN JEWS

Before Fidel Castro came to power in 1959, there were 15,000 Jews in Cuba. They were mostly of Eastern European descent and had come to Cuba to circumvent the restrictions which kept them out of the United States. Today there are 1200 Jews left in Cuba. Many live in small cities where they are tightly bound by collective memories of a tradition that was once an integral part of their families. Many are trying to reclaim their Jewish heritage, recalling their past and teaching it to their children.

Photographer Sharon Gurman Socol of Miami traveled to Cuba last year. In Santiago de Cuba and Camaguey she found communities united by the leadership of women, many with only one Jewish parent, usually their father. Socol was often told that "if people waited to marry a Jew, they would never be married." So family after intermarried family taps into its memory to provide some continuity of culture and history for themselves and their community.

Irene Zonszajn Chiprut and her mother Ana Celia Chiprut Esquenazi.

Clara Behar Canetti with her mother, Regina Behar Canetti, in their home in Santiago de Cuba.

Irene's father came from Poland after he lost his first wife and three children in th Holocaust. He was 23 years older than her mother, who came to Cuba from Turke Clara was born in Cuba of parents who came from Turkey and spoke Ladino an Hebrew in their home. Irene, a doctor, along with Clara, monitors th Jewish community's medical needs.

(l-r) Rosa Novoa, vice-president of the Santiago de Cuba Jewish youth, Jorges Riveria Behar, president, and Rosanna Cardet Levy, member.

Rebecca Botton Behar

She is the president of the Santiago de Cuba Jewis Community and hopes to revive the community "for th children." They celebrate in Rebecca's home on the fir night of Chanukah and on Passover, Purim, Ros Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Rebecca's father was onc the leader of the community and as a child she actual lived in the synagogue. Now they don't keep Shabbat becaus "in Cuba you have to work on Saturdays."

quella Romano Mechulam in the home of Raquel Albofaine ns (r).

The only source of light in Raquel's home is the lantern on the floor. Raquella, the daughter of a Jewish father and a Cuban Catholic mother, is the president of the Camaguey Jewish community. She wears a Chai *and* a Magen David around her neck.

To assist the Cuban Jewish community contact:

•Jewish Solidarity, Eddy and Xiomara Levy, Directors, 5055 Collins Ave., #5A, Miami Beach FL 33140. Telephone: (305) 868-7755. Fax (305) 866-3565. They deliver supplies directly to the Jewish community.

•American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 711 Third Ave., New York City, NY 10017. Telephone: (212) 687-6200. They arrange for supplies to go indirectly via countries such as Canada and Mexico.

SURROGATE MOTHERHOOD IN ISRAEL

Israel's Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau has announced that the Chief Rabbinate will approve the practice of surrogate motherhood, but only under rigorous restrictions, according to the newspaper Ha'aretz. Some of the conditions spelled out by Rabbi Lau are that the mother carrying the child not be married, careful records of the biological and surrogate mother be kept, and each case be approved by a special committee that includes a religious representative.

The report noted that many rabbis believe the surrogate mother is the child's real mother and are demanding that the biological parents go through adoption procedures.

NEW M.A. PROGRAM IN JEWISH WOMEN'S STUDIES

Why is Sarah's voice absent from the story of the binding of Isaac? What don't we yet know about the role of women in the ancient synagogue? Can a feminist perspective help uncover hidden facets of Jewish social history? These questions will be among those explored in a new master's degree program in Jewish Women's Studies scheduled to begin in Fall 1995 at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (the teaching arm of the Conservative movement in New York.)

"Bringing women's studies and Jewish studies together at J.T.S. provides an unparalleled opportunity," says Dr. Anne Lapidus Lerner, the first woman vice-chancellor at the Seminary, who will direct the new program and teach the required first-year seminar. Lerner says that the program will provide "in-depth, authentic Jewish study both for students just beginning Judaic studies and those with already strong Jewish backgrounds." Each student will conduct research, study feminist theory, and complete courses in a specific area of concentration as well as in Jewish women's studies. Contact: Graduate Admissions Office, Jewish Theological Seminary, 3080 Broadway, New York NY 10027. (212) 678-8022. E-mail: gradschool@jtsa.edu

For information about the Jewish Theological Seminary's Israel MA program in Judaic Studies with a concentration in Women's and Gender Studies [LILITH Fall 1994], contact Miriam Wernich, Beit Midrash, POB 8600, 91083 Jerusalem ISRAEL Phone: 972-2-790-755 or Fax:972-2-790-840.

Hair which completely replenishes itself is a powerful symbol. It can signify age, conformity, mourning, rebellion, punishment, servitude, sex appeal. It is styled to show beauty, removed to cause humiliation, interpreted as a sign of strength or weakness."

Connie Koppelman
(curator of the exhibit *Hair: the Long and Short of It.*)

H

AN INTR

FRIDA KAHLO (1907-1954), half-Jewish, half-Catholic Mexican painter, was renowned for painting, more than anything else, her own face—specifically her trademark mustache and single winged eyebrow. She bragged: "I love to draw each little hair of my mustache." Here, in *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair* (1940), she immortalizes one of many tempestuous arguments with her husband Diego Rivera. Defiantly shearing off her extraordinary long dark hair that Diego loved, she paints herself in challenging male clothing beneath trashy pop-lyrics: *"Look, if I used to love you, it was because of your hair. Now that you're* pelona *(bald), I don't love you anymore."*

In the beginning, God created heaven, earth a hair. We might think hair a trivial third choice, bu shows that God really got it—hair is the body's m versatile raw material. Hair is both body a costume; it's natural, yet it demands attention. Long uncomb hair, like that of ancient Nazirites, was even during biblical tim a nostalgic throwback to good old days, when humar uncontaminated by culture (read: combs), strolled as one with t beasts of the field.

We *love* our hair—uncut hair, particular colors or styles, c symbolize for us entire eras of our lives. Wreathing our shoulde cradling our faces, our hair is our shelter and womb. And we *ha* our hair—plucking it, shaving it, perming or dying it—our misc fuels the economy: we are perfect consumers, always unsatisfie When we remove our hair we enter the realm of religious idea our hairless (and/or emaciated) body is the martyr's. Jewi women in their *shaytls*, men with their *payess*, nuns shaved a capped, testify that they belong to a people consecrated to G These are ancient identifications: hair meaning separate, holy.

Hair, powerlessness, self-transformation. "At 27," muses wri Lynne Taetzsch, (in the book *Minding the Body* edited by Patric Foster), "I arrived at Newark airport with one suitcase and my month-old baby in my arms. Everyone felt sorry for me, course—a young mother (failed marriage) all alone in the wo with her baby. One of my brothers handed me $20 to ease t pain. I immediately went out and bought a box of Clairol silv blond. Perhaps if I could look in the mirror and see someone el this life wouldn't really be happening to me."

A harried young mother and lawyer explains. "When my life out of control, or I'm scared about embarking on something ne about performing, I turn to my friend: my hair. It understand Cutting it, coloring it, braiding it, I tell it: 'You're the only thi in my life I can control.' It's a never-failing intimacy: me and m hair. It helps me to take back my power."

Hair is about will. As Julia Epstein (co-editor of *Body Guard The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity)* puts it: "There's direct line from Delilah to the Nazi camps. Hair is sex; sex

UCTION

By Susan Schnur

wer." The question is: Whose will? Whose sex? Whose power? ho is the cutter, who the cuttee? Women who have been raped, port cutting off their hair soon afterwards.

In M. Gary Neuman's story (on the following pages) about the vish custom of *upsherin* (cutting a boy's hair for the first time ien he turns three and begins his Jewish study), a feminist's ute ear discerns little Yehuda's first Jewish syllogism: "Haircuts asculinize me; masculinized, I am ready for serious study; erefore . . . hmmm, what does this teach me about my sisters?"

wish Blondes. Several years ago I attended a conference for vish children (now grown) who had been hidden during the olocaust. Entering a room of 1000 or so (mostly female) Jews, I as blinded by b*l*o*n*d*n*e*s*s. Certainly some were True ondes—that fact was generally significant to their survival. It's sy to free-associate around blond Jewish Nazi-era children: by-chick-colored hair, sun-kissed, spun gold, apricot gold, msels in distress, angels, Madonnas, little Aryans. A blond male, writes beauty expert Mary Tannen, "is the done-to rather an the doer (and the doer is always a guy)."

And then there were survivor Bottle Blondes, those who had arned, as traumatized elementary-school Jews, that protective loration is a scorching lesson in life or death. Silence may = eath, but even more iconographically, Blonde = Life. These omen were no shallow copycats or impersonator blondes. They ere Female Heads: powerful totems against the Evil Eye. Blond rsions of Samson: feminine virility encoded in hair.

hich brings us to Hollywood. One of its definite seven wonders as the invention of that pantheon of celebrated blondes by none ner than dark-haired male Jewish film-moguls escaping New ork's garment district. Writes Susan Brownmiller (in *mininity)*: "The visions of blond loveliness these men projected to the screen bore no resemblance to their mothers and sisters, to the women they might have been expected to marry." We n thank Jewish men for: Jean Harlow, Marilyn Monroe, eronica Lake, for the associations of blondness with breathless lnerability, with tragedy, for the cult of blondness that leaves ny of us female non-Nordics plucking, waxing, insecure.

Even as a child, Kahlo wanted to be different. She ridiculed convention, flouted rules. Here she turns her signature eyebrow into a bird, a swallow in flight. "I don't care," she once wrote to a lover, "I like myself the way I am." She enjoyed mocking herself, and would say as she left a social gathering, "I have to go shave now." Picasso, a fan of hers, gave her the earrings she wears here: enormous hands. The last entry in her diary is a sketch of a black angel with the words: "I hope the exit is joyful, and I hope never to come back."

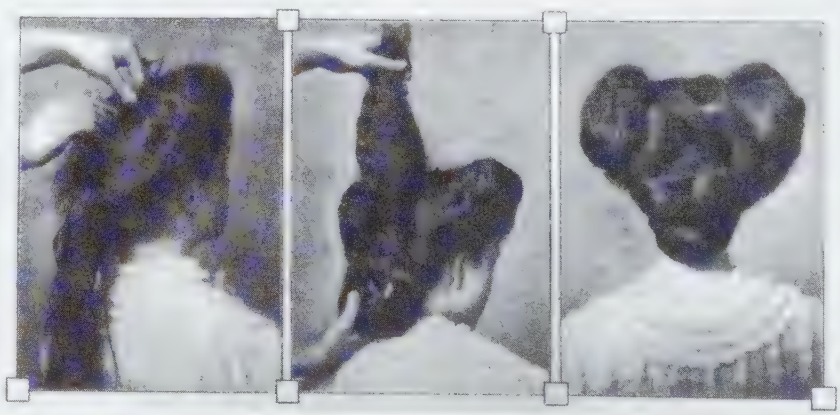
Feeling tortured, powerless, ridiculed, rejected. (My own informal research, in putting together these pages of hair stories, suggests that most Jewish women feel they have, in the words of one informant, "too much dark ethnic hair in too many awful places.")

Blond Advantage, continues Brownmiller, includes, "that one's body hair isn't frightening, unkempt, mannish. It's unchallenging, bubbly, froth." (Writes Karen Minns about her Catholic parochial school days: "We wondered why a blond nun had ever become a nun at all.") There is some male rage these days against brainy, dark-haired dynamo women who have taken to lightening their hair in order to appear less threatening (vide: Gloria Steinem, Barbara Walters, Hillary Clinton). Power Blondes. *Aren't there any standards anymore?* A man used to be able to depend on a blonde to at least *play* dumb.

And then there is Randy Milden's "Real Jewish Hair" (on the following pages)—a case wherein blond hair, on an adopted girl, is a provocation for her to work seriously overtime to "be Jewish."

Bighorn sheep. Like them, our species exhibits minimal sexual dimorphism–male and female humans look largely similar. This causes us much anxiety; we crave absolute binariness of male and female: One must be either/or. And so we recruit dualistic social constructions to substitute for biology's spectrum approach. Historically, for example, hair has always told instant stories to illiterates: Are you male or female? Slave or ruler? Virgin, married, widowed?

Says writer Zane Kotker (in *Rapunzel, Rapunzel*): "Polarity is important. Men achieve dominance by hair: the more hair, the fiercer. Quite simply, you appear to occupy more space if you've got dark fuzz all over you. He is the warrior who will fuss with his hair before going into battle; I will be inventing agriculture back outside the cave." (That last semicolon is critical. It establishes balance, sets up the Hegelian dialectic.)



Transgressive hair—that is, hair on a female that grows on male-staked territory (mustaches, underarm hair, hairy legs)—unsettles our two categories. It's not called "transgressive" for nothing—it treads on enemy soil, makes the enemy take out its shotguns. A hairy female leg, for example, provokes from most of America bizarrely disproportionate sociobiological fear and loathing. Says one college-age female: "The room was warm at my parents' Passover seder. I pulled my sweater over my head and thus revealed hairball underarms. The room reeled; all of patriarchy rustled in its grave."

Hair is power; hair is the opposite of power. "A highly qualified woman with extremely pronounced facial hair," comments Jennifer Miller (on the following pages), "ha virtually no employment options. This is really sad; she's ju so scary."

A century ago, American suffragist Charlotte Perkin Gilman recognized that hair would remain always the la frontier (as it surely has): "It wasn't the Lord who gave me short hair—it was the scissors," she told a female audience They were shocked, shocked. To alleviate their anxiety, sh added: "Don't worry. I'm not asking you to go home and cu your hair. You wouldn't do it anyway." Still, Gilman persisted *"If a woman cuts her hair off, people say, 'Oh, shame: sh wants to be a man!' But what do they say when the case i reversed? Whiskers are a man's natural prerogative, but no when he shaves off his whiskers and goes with a smooth face why don't they say to him, 'You want to look like a woman!"*

Zane Kotker plays dumb when she asks: "Why is leg hai considered more male than female if both of us have it?" A does Brownmiller: "Given a sample lock of hair for analysis, a expert would not be able to say if it came from the head of man or a woman."

"I look at someone like Jane Fonda," muses Brownmiller a we talk by phone one afternoon, "who has historically been strong feminist, and I see where progress absolutely stalls—sh has no courage in the underarm area." In our ow "transgressive" hair, we see how we have internalized rules o binary opposition and dominance: the slightest look askance b someone and we (almost to a woman) run to shave.

It was said about the 19th century social reformer John Ruskin (says Julie Epstein) that he wa thoroughly horrified on his wedding night to discover that wo men—not only thei polar opposites, men—have pubic hair. Hi marriage was annulle for non-consummation

They Don't Wea Wigs Here. It i already 1900, but Rose Cohen's Orthodo mother will not un cover her hair—for God's sake, Mother, this is America! The mother's dowdy kerchief-covered head bleats out the entire family's greenhorn status, humiliating Rose no end. Finally one day, after much argument, Rose wrestles her mother's kerchief from her head and starts styling her hair according t the latest religion: fashion. Writes Cohen (in *Out of the Shadows*): "My mother had never before in her married life hac her hair uncovered before anyone. She glanced at herself admitted frankly that she looked well, and began hastily to pu on her kerchief."

Later that night, however, just before Rose's father returns from work, the mother again modestly uncovers her hair.

"'What!' Rose's father exclaimed. 'Already you are coming an American lady!' Mother looked abashed for a moment; in the next, to my surprise and delight, I heard her blazen it out in her quiet way. 'As you see,' she said, 'I am not staying far behind.'"

For our immigrant foremothers, the equivalent of losing one's American virginity was throwing the *shaytl* off the ship's prow in view of the Statue of Liberty. Learning English might take years, but transforming one's head took but a moment, and had great symbolic power: instant *Yenkee*. But oh, to throw or not to throw—it could be a wrenching, agonizing question. To move with the secular, or stay grounded in the sacred? To be loyal to the Old Country, or be influenced by one's children's (and, often, husband's) vote for assimilation? An immigrant woman's first experiment in self-definition in this country: HAIR. Her choice (much more than her husband's) was seen as transcending her personally, advertising the sometimes contradictory values of her extended family. Some women solved the dilemma sequentially—bare head at home; kerchief in the marketplace; *shaytl* at shul. Or, bare head during the week; kerchief on *Shabbos*; *shaytl* on the High Holidays. Plumage—its varied pressures fell (and continue to fall) mostly upon females.

Divorce rates among immigrant Jews, says Barbara Schreier (in *Becoming American Women)* were startlingly high: "The man comes to this country first. Five years later, he sends for his wife, and finds her not five years behind, but two centuries." Bewigged wife from Russia, reminder of Jewish shame, of the cultural chasm. Many women who did "Americanize" overnight never ceased mourning their cast-off devotions, finding fashion to be spiritually cold.

In Russia, in the mid-19th century, the government tried to ban *shaytls*, believing that they inhibited assimilation. One Czarist decree, reports Schreier, promised special travel privileges to whomever acquiesced. Another threatened that "Jewish women will be inspected to discover whether or not they are shaving their heads."

From *Becoming American Women: Clothing and the Jewish Immigrant Experience, 1880-1920.*

And then there is Irene Glassgold's story (on the following pages): A woman howling, a husband insisting on the *shaytl* nonetheless. Writes Ruth Whitman in a poem called "Cutting the Wish Bride's Hair:" "This little amputation will shift the balance of the universe."

The Gendered Grammar of Hair. Recently visiting Israel, Dolly Myerowitz Levine passes a peculiar window display in a wig store in an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood. All of the wigged styrofoam heads, she notices, are wearing sunglasses. Levine, a classicist and hair aficionada, is curious to get the "story."

Hair as Metonymy

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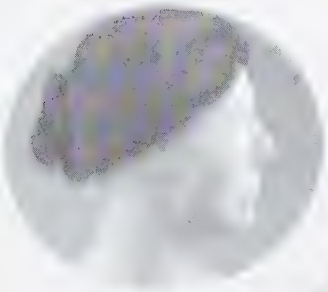
It turns out, she writes, that the self-styled "Modesty Brigade" of the town of B'nai Brak has experienced the luscious heads to be unbearably erotic—and has demanded that the owner cover every wisp with kerchiefs (in "The Gendered Grammar of Ancient Mediterranean Hair" in *Off With Her Head: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion and Culture,* edited by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz).

"When the shopkeeper protested that she was in the business of selling wigs and not scarves," Levine continues, "a rare compromise was reached." Sunglasses. Put out the styrofoam eyes, the rabbis perhaps figured, and the sirenic wigs cause only half an erection. (For opinions on why wigs are permitted to be other than grotesquely ugly anyway, see the following article, "Hair, O Israel," which examines Talmudic *shaytl* laws.)

How, asks Levine, does hair—upon both men's heads and women's—alleviate patriarchal anxieties? Ancient Mediterranean (male) warriors' hair, for example, was long (intended to primordially terrorize enemies), and Apollo, God of unsheared hair, was the testosteronic ideal: *forever* young, potent and lawless. Ancient Mediterranean brides' hair, on the other hand, was traditionally completely shorn, articulating the opposite: that every trace of female wildness could be extirpated;

(continued on page 38)



THE *SHAYTL* & SUSAN B. ANTHONY

BY IRENE GLASSGOLD

Mrs. Michaelson was shouting about her wig. It was a hot Baltimore summer afternoon. The temperature was 90, and the humidity was hovering close to 95. The *shaytl*, she claimed, was heavy and hot and was the cause of her extremely high blood pressure. Susan B. Anthony had freed American women from bondage, but she had not been able to lift the burden from Mrs. Michaelson's head. The Sanhedrin was too crafty even for Susan B. Anthony. Though she had been able to get the Constitution amended, Susan B. Anthony was unable to stop the Sanhedrin from continuing its subjugation of Jewish women.

Rabbi Michaelson again began his "too late" sermon. "We came to America too late, *rebetsn*. If we had come when we were younger. I would have shaved my beard. You could have grown your hair. I would have given up my Prince Albert and velvet hat. But now they've seen us like this. How can we change? How would I make a living? What would people say?"

In truth, Rabbi Michaelson knew this argument no longer worked with his wife. It used to work before she started Americanization class, and Susan B. Anthony had become her idol. Mrs. Michaelson had changed since she went to school to prepare for the citizenship exam. From a shy retiring woman, she had turned into an confident angry one. She had liked going to class and being away from her housewifely routines. Now, she thought that there was something to life besides husband, children and the shul sisterhood. Besides this, she had scored five points higher on the exam than her husband, and he had had private lessons. How could she score higher? His wife—a woman, who couldn't even be counted for a minyan.

"I'm burning up," Mrs. Michaelson continued angrily. "Look how I'm perspiring. And there's no sense to it. It's *pubic* hair that has to be covered up. Only the Sanhedrin would get confused and include *all* hair—they know it's not all hair! They use this for suppression, to make women look unattractive, older, unstylish. At least if I could go to New York to Madame Marie's. Her wigs are lighter, more becoming. Kohlerman's wigs are the heaviest and make you old before your time."

"New York? Where would we get the money? Do you understand how much I earn?" Rabbi Michaelson shot back. "Be thankful there is food on the table!"

"There will always be food on the table," Mrs. Michaelson replied acidly, "because you like to eat. There is always money for what you want. But your wages can never buy what I want."

> "WHAT RIGHTS *DON'T* YOU HAVE?" CRIED HER HUSBAND. "SUSAN B. ANTHONY GOT YOU THE VOTE. YOU CAN STILL VOTE IN A *SHAYTL*."

The truth, however, was more complicated. Actually, Mrs. Michaelson did accept her husband's "too late" argument. She also believed that they had arrived in America too late in their lives for things to change drastically for her. But she also felt her husband was overly concerned with "what people would say." She was sure that the congregation was not preoccupied with the subject of whether their *rebetsn* showed her own hair or that of the local wigmaker's. Mrs. Michaelson had had such gorgeous auburn hair, with natural curls. Like the Greenstein girl. Last night at the Greenstein girl's wedding, Frances walked down the aisle—such a beautiful young girl. After the wedding, in her going-away

t, she had on that frightful *shaytl*. She looked like a defeated d old woman, and the look on her face—the eternal ageless fering of Jewish women was on Frances' face.

The same thing had happened to her. A lovely young girl had en changed into a matronly woman. But going to nericanization class had filled her with hope. Perhaps something uld be retrieved. After all, it had not been easy for Susan B. thony either. She had even been arrested.

s. Michaelson went into the kitchen to pare the four-course dinner that they ate h evening. Even on such a hot day as this, re was an appetizer, soup, main course h side dishes and a dessert. Otherwise her sband would complain.

Rabbi Michaelson came in to supervise. did like to eat, and he wanted to make e that there was nothing on the menu that disliked. He sat down at the kitchen table.

e dinner, when Mrs. Michaelson mpleted the preparations, would suit him mirably. It was dairy: vegetarian chopped er made out of spinach and eggs, potato up, baked fish with cucumber salad, and ked apple.

"I used to have such beautiful auburn r, such wonderful curls—a lot of good y did me," Mrs. Michaelson sighed.

"Why are we talking about curls?"

"We are talking about curls because that what attracted you to me, and now that u got me I have to keep them covered pecially on days like these, when it's 90 grees outside, but it must be 150 in this chen."

"This is history, *rebetsn*. We had too late tart in America. How can you now take the wig when there are just ordinary us Jews whose wives wear wigs? What l these people say if the wife of the rabbi, head of the whole *Vad Ha'Rabanim*, who the example for the entire community, uld take off her wig?"

"That's the point! I'll set the example like Susan B. Anthony. carry her message. Men their rights and nothing more: women ir rights and nothing less."

"What rights don't you have that everyone else has?" Rabbi chaelson snorted. "Susan B. Anthony got women the vote. You vote in your *shaytl*."

"I can vote, but I'm enslaved!"

"What do you mean 'enslaved'?"

"Look at me!" Mrs. Michaelson shouted suddenly, her anger ain flaring. "I look like my grandmother in this wig. Only 37 ars old and what am I doing? I'm sweating under a *shaytl*, oking this ridiculous hot dinner when everyone knows that ay is the day for a cold salad. How come we don't know about d salads?"

"Salads are side dishes."

Mrs. Michaelson in her *shaytl*, c. 1937. Says Irene Glassgold: "This *shaytl* was the style back then—slightly wavy and pulled severely into a low knot at the back of the head, like a schoolteacher's bun. Sometimes Mrs. Michaelson wore a same-color hair net (made of hair) over the whole thing, to keep everything in place. Even today I can spot a *shaytl* a million miles away—no matter how stylish, they have a look about them."

"*Oy, Got in himl*, why don't you free me from this servitude? This kitchen is hot as *Gehenna*, only I'm sure it's not as hot *there*."

"Out of the way! I'll cook the dinner," said Rabbi Michaelson, pushing Mrs. Michaelson from the stove.

'No, you'll make a mess, and then I'll have to stay and swelter even longer, cleaning as well as cooking."

"You just want to argue! You say you're enslaved in this kitchen, but when I offer to free you, you come up with objections!"

"That's because you respond to details rather than the general picture! You just don't understand what it's like for me—to come to America, the land of opportunity, and to end up controlled by some ancient group of men who have no relevance to this day and age. I am in the New World. Ha! A lot of good it's doing me!" She was screaming.

"I'm sick of this!" Rabbi Michaelson banged on the stove top. "If this is a campaign to go around with your head uncovered, you're wasting your time, *rebetsn*. The answer is NO! ABSOLUTELY NO! DEFINITELY NO!"

"Sad was the day when I laid eyes on you! Who were you? A starving yeshiva boy? It was I who married beneath me. I who had a family tree of *robonim* since the 1500s! Who are you to tell me what to do, to be my supervisor, to tell me what is right from wrong?"

"I was a brilliant yeshiva boy who came to the home of a revered rabbi to court his daughter who we all believed wanted a *talmid khokhem*, who would hold her husband in high esteem and observe all the Jewish laws and customs..."

"That's the point. Exactly the point," interjected Mrs. Michaelson. "I do observe the laws and customs. I do respect your learning. But where does it say about a *shaytl*? Are men so oversexed that the sight of a married woman's hair would get them excited? Why punish poor women for that?" and she too banged on the stove top.

"All the women in your family wore *shaytls*, and you should be grateful to me. I rescued you from Hungary, from Oppihide, that tiny town, from the rural life, brought you to a new land, a big city."

"Ah, now we're getting somewhere. What good is it to be here if everything is the same?"

"Everything is better! We have a big house, two bathrooms; we live across from a park. The air is fresh like the country, and we live in the city!"

"BUT I CAN'T BREATHE!"

Mrs. Michaelson hadn't meant that she actually couldn't breathe physically, but when Rabbi Michaelson looked at his wife, her face was scarlet, and she was gasping. "Get out of this kitchen," he screamed. "Go sit out on the porch! I'll call Dr. Kampleman."

(continued on page 34)

GENDER-BENDING AND AN ANCIENT JEWISH CUSTOM

BY M. GARY NEUMAN

If you called my son a "she" or a "cute little girl," I wouldn't correct you. He's mistaken for a girl wit such regularity that I've long since exchanged my explanations for a smile and silence. Let me explain There's a custom among observant Jews to let a male child's hair grow uncut until age three.

On his third birthday, a huge celebration and "haircutting ceremony" called an *"upsherin"* takes place. At our son's *upsherin*, close to 200 friends and family attended. Tables of homemade cakes and brownies encircled a large sheet cake on which was written all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Outside, we had a petting zoo; inside, pizza. My wife and I had spent hours preparing.

We poured champagne for a *l'chaim* toast, and the big moment arrived. I said a few words of blessing to Yehuda (expressing his family's hopes that he grow to bring *nachas* to himself and his people), and I thanked the community for the roles we each play in bringing up one another's children. Yehuda was presented with his first *kippah* and *tzitzis*, the four-cornered undergarment he would now be encouraged to wear daily. Yehuda's community—which would continue to support and nurture him through childhood—understood this moment as the beginning of its formal responsibility to educate him in the performance of *mitzvos* [positive commandments], which Yehuda would take his place in assuming.

While we all sang, the head of the Rabbinic Academy cut the first lock of hair, followed by grandparents, cousins and friends. Back home after the party (and a stop at a professional barber), Yehuda marveled at his "big boy" image and watched the video of his party again and again. I had a sense, for the first time, how my parents had felt at my *upsherin*.

"HIS LONG HAIR OFTEN HELPS ME ATTAIN A MORE GENTLE PARENTING STYLE."

Upsherin (which means 'first cutting dates back to ancient times, though t etiology of t custom remai obscure. It seems be connected to t Jewish law whi prohibits the ha vesting of a fru tree before the tr reaches a maturi of three years. E analogy, "prunin the child's ha ('hair' and 'foliag are the same word Greek and Latin) age three represen the placing of lim on nature—culture introduced. The child's mind is, as it wer first "harvested;" formal education begir That's why there's a Hebrew alphabet Yehuda's cake. Jewish mysticism also like toddlers' innocence and inherent holiness that of biblical Nazirites who do not cut the hair or drink wine, and who dedica themselves to holiness.

I found myself thinking about Nazirit

Editors' note: As far as LILITH knows, upsheri *ceremonies do not exist for three-year-old girls. If yo know differently, We would love to hear from you.*

e night while I watched my son running down the sandy Miami ach at dusk, his dirty blond hair halfway down his back flying in wind. That small figure framed against the waves and sunset lly did look mystical, angelic, free of all societal restraints. Like Nazirite—he seemed almost untouched by civilization.

I thought about the implications of Yehuda's long lustrous r, and about the role that his long hair has played in his short e. Though my wife and I try to be aware of gender bias in our ild rearing, I would be lying if I didn't admit that I do, consciously, treat my son differently from my daughter.

I expect more from my son. Because he is male, I believe that ciety generally gives Yehuda the message that he should be more ult, that he can absorb a little more criticism than a female of the ne age. I get irritated at his small tantrums or pouts, while the same navior from my daughter makes me smile and shake my head.

I feel an urgent need to teach Yehuda his Hebrew letters, to ve him attempt the Passover questions. I expect him to shake father's hand in shul and to speak respectfully. In short, I find nore difficult to allow my son to act his age; easier to allow my ughter to act her age.

Too often, if I'm in a cranky mood, I won't allow Yehuda the all defiances and normal outbursts that children display. I'll be too prepared to criticize and correct. But then it hits me: that hair. The long golden strands covering his neck, back and often his eyes jostle my memory—he's not even three. Just a baby who deserves the right to act like one. He needs my love and acceptance now and forever. I think his long hair often helps me attain a gentler parenting style; hopefully a style that will stick with me in the future.

I do feel that a special bond between my son and myself formed specifically during the year when he was two, and I wonder if this would have been a little different without his long hair and girlish look. It's no coincidence, I am sure, that the "terrible twos" coincide with a boy's hair at its longest.

At Yehuda's *upsherin*, my throat tightened and I felt wistful. For me, a great part of my son's innocence (and maybe mine) is connected to his long, untouched hair. I saved the golden locks, of course, and will show them to anyone who laughs at old family customs. ❑

M. Gary Neuman is a psychotherapist in private practice in Miami Beach, and the author of several articles and books. His most recent therapeutic program for children of divorce, called Sandcastles, was featured on CBS and NBC Nightly News.

AS AN ADOPTED CHILD, ALL I WANTED WAS REAL JEWISH HAIR."

r. Randy Milden, currently Dean of the College at Haverford College, was adopted as an infant in 1951. During those years in Massachusetts, ptive parents were required by law to be of the ne faith as the child's birth mother. Growing as a Jew in the working-class mill town of verhill, Massachusetts, Milden's blond hair ame the stage upon which she rehearsed and knowledged her torment about her "real" ntity.

PIA SWEDEN, *Girlfriend #1*

I always knew intellectually that I was adopted, that my biological mother was Jewish, but n there was this HAIR—"dirty blond," it was ed then, baby-fine, thin, wispy hair. To myself alled it "*shiksa* hair." I didn't know who my logical father was.

The Jewish community in Haverhill, ssachusetts, was a major factor in my life. It s tightly knit, 300 families. From early on, I longed to "look vish," which to me meant getting rid of "the hair," meant having , dark curly Jewish hair.

One of my earliest memories is being shlepped to Helen's auty Parlor for "body permanents"—it was either 5 perms before age of 4, or 4 before the age of 5. I would sit there, this tiny girl h terrible hair, all the ladies and smells and rollers, capes, such nes. And then I would leave Helen's with these Shirley Temple ls—but by the time we got home, my hair would be all straight horrible again. It was sad. It was tragic. My mother really nted a little girl with curls—so this was her tragedy as well as ne. I was an only child.

By the time I hit adolescence—with bar mitzvah parties constantly—I would go to synagogue each week with dirty hair (but with a hat on), and then walk down to Helen's Beauty Parlor and get my hair washed and set. It felt like a lonely journey from shul to Helen's.

By the time my mother picked me up, it seemed like hours. I would cry and scream about how my hair was "wrong"—and it was somehow my mother's fault. Red-eyed, I'd get picked up to go to the bar mitzvah party.

I never thought of any larger "blond American ideal," but just Haverhill with its Irish Catholics (also dark-haired) and Jews. All I wanted was to "look Jewish," to belong. All my cousins had much better hair. I knocked myself out trying to be Jewish—I even won the Rabbi Abraham Isaac Jacobson Leadership award in confirmation class. I had friends who ironed their curly thick frizzy hair so that they'd look like WASP icons—that was so perplexing.

I first met my biological mother when I was in my mid-20s. I walked in the door and asked to use her bathroom, and there were all these products for baby-fine, thin hair, terrible hair. What an irony—the "*shiksa* hair" was Jewish! I came out of the bathroom and announced to her: "Everything else is negotiable, but I'll never forgive you for the hair."

She laughed.

All those times that people had said to me, "Gee, you don't look Jewish." If only once someone had said the opposite—that would have been the best day of my life.

–Susan Schnur

BLOND BRAIDS AT AUSCHWITZ

BY LIVIA E. BITTON JACKSON

PHOTO: ARTHUR MAGUN
Note: A model was used for this photo

The following memoir is excerpted from Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust *by Carol Rittner and John Roth [Paragon House, 1993]. Livia E. Bitton Jackson, the author of the account below, was deported to Auschwitz with her Orthodox Hungarian family in May, 1944. She had just gotten a bright yellow Schwinn bicycle with shiny chrome handlebars for her 13th birthday. Life changed overnight.*

Before the Soviet Army liberated the camp in January, 1945, the Germans emptied out nearly everything from Auschwitz's storehouses. Still, seven tons of shorn human hair—only a small part of the total collected at Auschwitz—was found. The rest had been sold to German companies that transformed hair into mattresses and felt.

Sometime during the fourth night, the train comes to a halt. We are suddenly awakened by the noise of sliding doors thrown open and cold night air rushing into the wagon. A huge sign catches my eye: AUSCHWITZ. . . An officer in gray SS uniform stands facing the lines of women and children. Dogs straining on short leashes held by SS soldiers flank him on both sides. He stops each line and regroups them. Some to his right and some to his left. Then he orders each group to march on. I tremble as I stand before him. But he looks at me with a soft look in friendly eyes.

"Goldene Haar!" he exclaims as he takes one of my long braids into his hand. I am not certain I heard it right. Did he say "golden hair" about my braids?

"Bist du Judin?" Are you Jewish?

The question startles me. "Yes, I am Jewish."

"Wie alt bist du?" How old are you?

"I am thirteen."

"You are tall for your age. Is this your mother?" He touches Mommy lightly on the shoulder: "You go with your mother." With his riding stick he parts my Aunt Szeren from my mother's embrace and gently shoves Mommy and me to the group moving to the right.

"Go, and remember, from now on you are sixteen."

Our silent, rapid march ends. By fives we file through the entrance of a long, flat gray building.

"Sich auskleiden! Alles herunter!" Get undressed, everybody! Take off everything! *"Los!"*

The room is swarming with SS men. Get undressed, here? In front of the men? No one moved.

"Didn't you hear? Take off your clothes. All your clothes!"

I feel the slap of a whip on my shoulders and meet a young SS soldier's glaring eyes.

"Hurry! Strip fast. You will be shot. Those having any cloth on in five minutes will be shot!"

I look at Mommy. She nods. Let's get undressed. I stare direc ahead as I take off my clothes. I am afraid. By not looking anyone I hope no one will see me. I have never seen my mother the nude. How awful it must be for her. I hesitate before removi my bra. My breasts are two growing buds, taut and sensitive can't have anyone see them. I decide to leave my bra on.

Just then a shot rings out. The charge is ear-shattering. Sor women begin to scream. Others weep. I quickly take my bra off.

It is chilly and frightening. Clothes lie in mounds on the ceme floor. We are herded, over a thousand, shivering, humiliated nu bodies, into the next hall, even chillier. More foreboding. It darker here. Barer.

"Los! Schneller, blode Lumpen!" Faster. Move faster, idio whores.

We are lined up and several husky girls in gray cloaks beg shaving our hair—on our heads, under the arms, and on the pub area. My long, thick braids remain braided and while the shavi machine shears my scalp, the hair remains hanging, tugging at t roots. The pain of the heavy braid tugging mercilessly at the y unshaven roots brings tears to my eyes. I pray for the shaving to done quickly. As my blonde tresses lie in a large heap on t ground, the indifferent hair butcher remarks: "A heap of gold." In shudder I remember the scene at the selection—the SS officer admiration of my "golden hair," the separation from Aunt Szere Where is she now? Is her hair shorn off and is she stripped of h clothes, too? Is she very frightened? Poor, darling, Szeren *neni*. my hair were shorn before the selection, we would be together wi her now. We would not have been separated. It's because of m blonde hair that Mommy and I were sent to the other side. Po

ling. If only we could have stayed together!

The haircut has a startling effect on every woman's appearance. ividuals become a mass of bodies. Height, stoutness, or nness: There is no distinguishing factor—it is the absence of r which transformed individual men into like bodies. Age and other sonal differences melt away. Facial pressions disappear. Instead, a nk, senseless stare emerges on a usand faces of one naked, appealing body. In a matter of nutes even the physical aspect of our mbers seems reduced—there is less a substance to our dimensions. We come a monolithic mass. onsequential.

THE HAIR SHAVING HAS A CURIOUS EFFECT. THE BURDEN OF IDENTITY IS LIFTED.

The shaving had a curious effect. A burden was lifted. The den of individuality. Of associations. Of identity. Of the recent t. Girls who have continually wept at separation from parents, ers and brothers now began to giggle at the strange appearance their friends. Some shriek with laughter. Others begin calling names of friends to see if they can recognize them shorn and stripped. When response to names comes forth from completely tranformed bodies, recognition is loud, hysterical. Wild, noisy embraces. Shrieking, screaming disbelief. Some girls bury their faces in their palms and howl, rolling on the ground.

"*Was ist los?*" What's the matter? A few swings of the SS whip restores order.

I look for Mommy. I find her easily. The haircut has not changed her. I have been used to seeing her in Orthodox kerchiefs, every bit of hair carefully tucked away. Avoiding a glance at her body, I marvel at the beauty of her face. With all accessories gone her perfect features are even more striking. Her high forehead, large blue eyes, classic nose, shapely lips and elegant cheekbones are more evident than ever.

She does not recognize me as I stand before her. Then a sudden smile of recognition: "Elli! It's you. You look just like Bubbie. Strange, I have never seen the resemblance before. What a boyish face! They cut off your beautiful braids . . . ." ❑

IAIR APPARENT: CONSIDERING ULTRA-ORTHODOXY AT 17

san Josephs, 23, is a staff writer at New York's Jewish Week. *ormerly she was an editorial intern at* Ms. *magazine, and fore that editor-in-chief of U.C.L.A.'s Jewish monthly.* a'Am. *When Josephs was 17—six short years ago– wo roads diverged in a yellow wood" and she—she took the ad to the left, and that's been hairy.*

When I was a child, my mother always made me cut my hair ort. I have very thick, curly, dark, quintessentially "Jewish" ir. I love my Jewish hair, and I've always wanted it long. It was constant, huge struggle between my mother and me. At 14, I gan to grow my hair long, and my mother dn't interfere.

"MY HAIR WAS HOW I WAS GOING TO PROCLAIM AUTONOMY IN MY LIFE."

My hair became an extension of yself—how I was going to establish tonomy in my life. Sometimes when I'm ustrated, when I'm thinking and have a eative idea, I touch my hair—it's an external thing that's much ore than a physical characteristic to me. Hair means dependent thought; it means freedom.

When I graduated from high school in San Diego, I was in the pths of a spiritual quandary. I grew up in an Orthodox family, t went to public high school. I was also very involved in the thodox youth organization, N.C.S.Y.

In other words, I was fragmented: In public school I was doing eater, I had friends who knew nothing about my life in Judaism. N.C.S.Y. there was a correct "brand" of Judaism—the ultimate ing to do was to observe everything halakhically, and to go udy for a year in Israel when you finished high school to ind yourself."

I compromised by going to Brovender's yeshiva in Jerusalem for a summer. They have the reputation as the yeshiva with the most rigorous study program for women—at that time, they were the only yeshiva teaching Gemorrah to women.

I wanted to figure out who I was. I was very seriously trying to picture myself taking on all the trappings of a Strictly Orthodox Person. There was a lot of social pressure to wear skirts every day, and that was already oppressive to me. But in conversations with other students, it was—"Of course we'll cover our hair; when you get married you HAVE to cover your hair," and that's what really terrified me.

The skirts I was doing. Grappling with the Laws of Purity I was doing. But what really struck terror into my heart, what really made me angry, was the thought that I would have to take my hair THAT I LOVE and conceal it. That would mean suffocating. It would mean stripping me of me.

That was my critical watershed point because it was the only thing I knew without question: I would not be covering my hair. From that certainty, I looked at other facets of Orthodoxy.

Since beginning to grow my hair out at 14, my hair has been long. People describe me: "She has this kind of—Hair." "You can't miss her, she's the woman with the HAIR." "She has this HAIR." I wouldn't say it's beautiful, but I unquestionably love my long, dark, curly, thick, quintessentially Jewish hair. People tease me, "How come you never want to do anything new to your hair?"

I love it long—the longer it gets, the freer I am.

—Susan Schnur

Hair &

Braids

Friday morning
I braid my hair
in front of the mirror
cannot see behind my head
think of braids
I might have made
on a Friday morning
kneading dough
separating it into strands
& braiding them
into a crown
round as a rose
as only our villiage did
for Sabbath bread
the whole world would know
here is a challah from Tels
taste it

— *Layle Silbert*

Hair

Ardently down the backs of cousins
in Poland until it brushed their ribs
the silkworm cousins grew the hair
Sarah Fishoff Silverman peddled
in Missouri.
In Sedalia meager enterprising waves
swelled over coils and switches
off Polish Jews, hair grown
to drape on Sarah's forearm.
She walked the town selling hair
of those who stayed behind,
sticking her other palm out with coins,
trusting strangers to make change
for the hair that caught the fancy
of stylish Midwestern ladies,
the curls and braids that pleased the Nazis
who trimmed their lampshades with Jewish hair,
fashioned bellcords to summon butlers
from my cousins' hair that grew no more.

— *Maxine Silverman*

Ballad of the Washed Hair

The stones on the mountain are always
awake and white.

In the dark town, angels on duty
are changing shifts.

A girl who has washed her hair
asks the hard world, as if it were Samson,
where is it weak, what is its secret.

A girl who has washed her hair
puts new clouds on her head.

The scent of her drying hair is
prophesying in the streets and among stars.

The nervous air between the night trees
starts to relax.

The thick telephone book of world history
closes.

—*Yehuda Amichai*

Desire

Brushing Out My Daughter's Hair

Brushing out my daughter's dark
ilken hair before the mirror
see the gray gleaming on my head,
he silver-haired servant behind her.Why is it
ust as we begin to go
hey being to arrive, the fold in my neck
larifying as the fine bones of her
ips sharpen? As my skin shows
ts dry pitting, she opens like a small
ale flower on the tip of a cactus;
s my last chances to bear a child
re falling through my body, the duds among them,
er full purse of eggs, round and
irm as hard-boiled yolks, is about
o snap its clasp. I brush her tangled
ragrant hair at bedtime. It's an old
tory—the oldest we have on our planet—
he story of replacement.

—*Sharon Olds*

Dead Women

return
to brush
their hair.

They use our combs,
careful not to break
the teeth.

They borrow our brushes,
leaving a trace of hair
in the bristles.

They enter our beds
to feel the warmth of a man
they have almost forgotten,

but not forgotten.
They try on our gloves and soft
scarves.

They try on our nightgowns
and turn slowly
in front of the mirror.

In the morning we wake,
smooth out the gowns and scarves
in the drawer, sit in front

of the mirror.
We raise the brush or comb to our heads,
stop, notice the hair,

continue.

—*Siv Cedering Fox*

I'm Letting It Grow

Mother, I'm letting it grow,
enjoying letting it grow—
the thick brown hairs
on my thighs
you made me shave
for beaches and parades.

I'm letting it grow, Ma,
dark and curling as creeping ivy
to see if there's a man alive
who'll have the guts
to walk with me in shorts
down streets, in public places.

And if there's not—
I'll dye it black
and grow it thick and wilder;
naked hair will trail
like banners through the crowds—
all eyes glued to these gorilla legs
as they plod forth like Kong,
hairy and alone
but in their own direction.

—*Nancy Blotter*

Ballad of theWashed Hair is from *Selected Poetry of Yehudah Amichai*, translated by Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell, HarperPerennial, 1986. *Hair* is from *Voices within the Ark*, Avon, 1980. *Braids* is from *Sarah's Daughters Sing*, edited by Henny Wenkart, Jewish Women's Resource Center, National Council of Jewish Women, NYC, 1990. *Mother I'm Letting it Grow* and *Dead Women* is from *Rapunzel, Rapunzel*, edited by Kathryn Maachan Aal, Mcbooks Press, Ithaca, NY, 1980. *Brushing Out My Daughter's Hair* is from *The Dead and The Living* by Sharon Olds, Knopf, 1984.

HAIR, ISRAEL: JEWISH WIG LAWS

BY SUSAN SCHNUR

What does *halakha* [Jewish law] say about women being required to cover their hair? According to Haviva Krasner-Davidson (a woman with special expertise in this matter) the answer begins with the Bible, which gives us but two relevant hair passages:

First, Deuteronomy (21:10-14) tells us that when a woman is taken captive during war, it is mandatory that her captor cut off her hair. One month later, "after she has mourned her mother and father," to quote the Bible, her captor can marry her. The hair principle extracted from this, explains Krasner-Davidson, "is that hair is sexually alluring, which is why the captor must cut his captive's hair—so that he won't be attracted to her during the month that she is not yet his wife." [Most male *halakhic* scholars have a special gene that allows them to stay focused during discussions like this, and not get waylaid by random umbrage.]

Second, Numbers (5:11-31) discusses the infamous *sotah*, she who is accused of adultery, and is brought before the high priest who *"parah"s* her hair. Krasner-Davidson explains that the meaning of *parah* is murky—is it "loosen" or "uncover?" In either case, she says, later generations (of hairsplitters) use this reference as the source which conveys that "having one's hair exposed was shameful during biblical times."

Next the Mishna (*Ketuvot 7*) comes up with a surprisingly severe Q and A: Is there any instance in which a woman, divorced by her husband, does not receive compensatory financial support [*ketubah* dues]? Answer: Yes—the woman who goes out in public with her hair uncovered does not receive support. However, adds Krasner-Davidson, despite this harsh Mishnaic view of the hairy woman, the rabbis here understand hair covering to be more a matter of custom than law.

The Gemarrah, though (*Ketuvot* 72A-B), disagrees. Hair covering, it maintains, is law, not custom. Moreover, it's a "practice of biblical origin, which makes transgressing it even more serious," explains Krasner-Davidson. This quarrel—is it law or custom that prescribes hair covering—is important, because it is the pivot upon which centuries of rotating religious hair injunctions are mounted. (If you're Mishna-prone, you interpret hair-covering more leniently; if you're Gemarrah-prone, more stringently.)

During the Middle Ages, married Jewish women in Europe covered their hair with scarves [*tikhlach*]—but then again so d non-Jewish women. *Halakhic* headhunters, then, find it hai teasing out whether medieval scarf-wearing had more to do w Jewish injunctions or with conformity to larger, non-Jewi standards of "female modesty." This becomes significant to la hair arbiters whose rulings distinguish between general custom Jewish law.

By the 16th century, wigs were on the scene. They we fashionable in [Christian] France, and Jewish women throughout Europe (presumably those who were more well-to-do) jumped on the bandwagon. *Shaytlach* [wigs] were considered more toothsome than *tikhlach* [head scarves], so Jewish women's embrace of them represented a kind of feminist revolt. Indeed, says Krasner-Davidson, "Most rabbinic authorities denounced *shaytl*-wearing as tantamount to going with one's head uncovered, since a *shaytl* look just as sexually alluring (if not more so) than a woman's own hair."

> THERE ARE LOTS OF RELIGIOUS INTERPRETATIONS —SOME CONFLICTING WITH OTHERS— OF THE INJUNCTION FOR JEWISH WOMEN TO COVER THEIR HAIR.

"Rabbi Moshe Isserles ruled in the 16th century, however continues Krasner-Davidson, "that a wig is admissible, and it's t opinion that was accepted by the Ashkenazi community." recent exhibit at the Jewish Museum included European *shaytla* that looked like cottony Raggedy Ann mops—it's hard to imagi them as a step up from *anything*.)

In one of those paradoxical reversals that define tonsorial soc history, ultra-Orthodox communities today consider wigs—n scarves—to be the more stringent practice. Even though a wig c cost well over $1000 and look positively sirenic, a woman who ti up all her hair and covers it with a hat or scarf will receive, sa Krasner-Davidson, "disapproving looks." She adds: "Recently, some ultra-Orthodox communities, rabbis have issue proclamations telling women that they must wear hats on top their *shaytlach*." [Author's comment: Oy.]

Finally we have the question of whether hair is *ervah* [a part

body that, in Orthodox practice, must always be covered in lic—like breasts, thighs, shoulders], or is it something that, when ered, simply serves to state that a woman is married and thus not ilable to other men. Some hold that hair is not *ervah* (since a man ermitted to see his wife's hair even when she's sexually off- its to him); others see hair as "straight *ervah*, so that a woman o does not cover her hair is seen as promiscuous (as if you had r breasts showing), not just immodest," says Krasner-Davidson.

Must women *halahkically* keep their hair covered even in their n homes? Some say yes, explains Krasner-Davidson. "They e this on the story in the Talmud [*Yoma* 47A] about a woman ned Kimhit who had seven sons all of whom became high ests. When the rabbis asked her how she merited this, she wered that in her whole life, even the walls of her house never a strand of her hair." (Krasner-Davidson adds: "This story is o the source of the custom in some ultra-Orthodox communities married women to keep their heads shaved.")

The most common at-home custom for very religious women, tinues Krasner-Davidson, "is to keep their hair covered in public, not when they are alone with their families." This practice is ed on the most widely accepted current interpretation of hair: that wing it does not constitute *ervah*; just "female immodesty."

On one of the many other hands, however, some women will w their hair in their homes even in front of male non-relatives. s is because "some consider this *mitzvah* as connected to place and not to the woman herself," explains Krasner-Davidson. "Therefore, if she is in her home, she does not need to wear her covering. The Talmudic source for this practice is striking: 'If the fact that women must cover their hair even in their own courtyard is true, then no daughter would have married even Abraham our Forefather.' The implication is that this is *too much* to ask of any woman."

In our century, "covering hair has fallen out of practice in many observant communities," concludes Krasner-Davidson. "Some wives of well-respected rabbis—even those considered 'giants' of their generations—did not or do not cover their hair. Those who say that hair-covering is more a matter of custom (rather than law) point to the social mores of our times, arguing that since it is not considered immodest for women in general society to keep their heads uncovered, then head-covering no longer applies."

Though this author's head was giving off steam through a good part of this *halakhic* discussion, Krasner-Davidson's head stayed cool. "I agree with hats on top of *shaytls*," she says. "Gorgeous wigs defeat the whole purpose of 'modesty,' meeting the letter of the law, but not its spirit. I get upset when *halakhic* loopholes become the highest standard. With wigs, you've defeated the idea of conveying whether you're married, since they often look so perfect you don't know they are wigs. I like to dress modestly, and to convey that I'm married. It makes men take me and my mind more seriously; they don't look at me as an object. And that let's me have an easier time talking with men." ❑

Black-Jewish Daughter

Lisa Jones, Village Voice *staffer, is the daughter of two pretty famous people: black nationalist Amiri Baraka, and white Jew Hettie Jones. The following is excerpted from her new book,* bulletproof diva: tales of race, sex, and hair *[Doubleday, 1994].*

how i invented multiculturalism. It was easier than you think. First I arrived, fatter than an A&P chicken, just another black child in New York City born to a Jewish woman and a Negro man. At the wee age of three I followed my sister to the Church of All Nations school on the Lower East Side. For many years I thought the entire world was a band of Latin, black, and Chinese children dancing around the maypole and singing "Que Bonita Bandera" and the few Ukrainians who served us lunch.

Endured my first Toni home permanent at age six to have an Afro like Angela Davis. This continued for four years, then thanks to chemical overload or natural progression, my hair napped up enough to make a 'fro on its own.

Ate potato kugel and boiled chicken with Aunt Fannie, the only Jewish relative who didn't disown my mother for marrying a black man. Eighty-year-old Aunt Fannie stayed in Flatbush through the Caribbean migration and was known to have made only one comment about her niece's interracial marriage: "How do you wash that hair?" she said, leaning over her grandnieces, still in grade school, and their enormous globes of nappiness.

> "Jewish women iron, Asian women perm, WASPs highlight, what do Black women do?"

hair always and forever. We ate lunch, the tape recorder was rolling, and now the legendary jazz singer would tell me her life story. This was her preface: "When I was a little girl, about 13 or so, they told me that a woman's pride and glory was her hair. Then they told me mine wasn't any good. I guess I went to war to absolve myself of this grief."

Not, "Back when I used to gig at the Five Spot . . . " or "Coleman Hawkins sure could blow . . . " but, everything I've done with my hair explains everything I've done with my life and my art. This wasn't an epiphany for me as much as a confirmation of something I've believed for a while. Hair is the be-all and end-all. Everything I know about American history I learned from looking at black people's hair. It's the perfect metaphor for the African experiment here: the price of the ticket (for a journey no one

(continued on page 35)

Trans-gressive Hair:

THE LASTFRONTIER

Day 1: Here I am at Yiddish music camp (KlezKamp)—five days with 450 other people, extraordinary programs, so much Jewish talent, brains, attitude. Despite this atmosphere of abundance, however, everyone's fixated on this one thing: this gender-ambiguous person. Is it a male or female? This person is on and off stage all evening (as a microphone techie), so you can really stare.

Day 2: I'm told her name is Jennifer. Now it seems obvious—she's a woman with a full beard. It's amazing how dominating her quiet presence is. Everybody's whispering about her: Why doesn't she shave? What's her story?

Day 3: By today she's got people fascinated by their fascination: How is it that a little bit of hair is so damn interesting? Here we have the hottest Klezmer bands around, witty instructors, great food, and everyone's walking around: "Help me out with this HAIR thing."

Day 4: Lunch today at a table that ends up all female. This young woman says: "There are lots of women here who would look exactly like her if they didn't remove their facial hair. Like me." (No! I would never have guessed. Now looking close I see: she must shave. Golly.) Then she challenges all 12 of us at the table: "If you've never bleached or removed hair from your face, raise your hand." No one's hand goes up. "See?" she says. I realize so many dark-haired women must walk around with some low-level shame; little leaching secrets. Who is this Jennifer person? None of us at this table, we decide, would ever have her courage.

Day 5: The last day of camp. A woman mentions how attractive Jennifer is. I agree. She looks like Jesus—mournful doe eyes, gentle body carriage. Courage is so attractive. We actually don't see Jennifer's beard anymore: just this beautiful face that presents itself unapologetically, just the way it is, to the world. It's amazing what an education this face—wordlessly—has given many of us this week.

The lessons Jennifer Miller taught me—just by being in my world for a few days, walking around like any other person—were profound. She refused to apologize for herself. I realized, in experiencing her presence, how rare that quality is in women. It was liberating to just be around her. She's what you might call a Jew's Jew, in the sense that she's the kind of outsider (like Moses, say) who is capable of "seeing," of applying pressure upon a whole social structure, of pushing the envelope towards the checks-and-balances of diversity. To be a woman who likes her body the way God made it—this is treason; wanton, male, too independent.

Jennifer Miller told me her story, in several conversations:

BY SUSAN SCHNUR

I grew up in Hartford, Connecticut where both of m parents were college professors. I was a tomboy, ve athletic, interested in juggling, clowning, gymnastic dancing, acting—pretty much in that order. By the time started to get a little beard hair, around age 17, I had a strong co particularly from my mother and grandmother, that people shou be who they are: true to themselves.

My mother and grandmother were both educators, toug dynamic women who stressed the individuality of each learner in classroom. My grandmother, famous in her field, specialized developing diagnostic materials for children with perceptu reading disabilities. Her classrooms (she had her own center f educational therapy) were all individualized instruction. M mother, inheriting her mother's educational philosophy, fought th public school system in Hartford and eventually got every teach re-trained to teach in open classrooms. So the message I got wa fundamentally non-conformist: it's appropriate, importan beautiful to be who you are; everyone is special and right; let encourage different ways of being. Their perspectives had a lot do with strengthening my character. What I understood was: read your own speed, do math according to your ability, and b extension, I guess, love your own face.

It took 10 years for my facial hair to grow in. My mother, wi whom I was very close, died when I was 21 (she was 48; cancer so she and I didn't really work out my hair thing. For years I didn even talk to my closest friends about my beard—it was sort o taboo. I harbored fear and insecurity; I did not blossom overnigh into proud beard ownership. At first it was just a few hairs, then few more, then more: it was not at the beginning clear that this wa going to be a beard.

Through these same years, though—I'm now 34—I was comin out as a lesbian, getting involved in issues of the 1970s: equal right "the matriarchy overthrowing the patriarchy," this whole new aesthet of reclaiming nature and naturalness. My beard grew really slowly, so had a long time to think and change alongside of it. By the time created my own theater [CIRCUS AMOK, a 12-person one-rin traveling feminist circus complete with musicians, jugglers, acrobats]- had developed a lesbian feminist ideology, and a circus image to g with it. I was growing up artistically in the East Village of New Yor learning how to get away from the tyranny of gendered roles i performance. Women could dress like sword-throwing males, etc.

One day when I was 20, my grandmother made an appointmen for me for electrolysis. I held this rubber rod to ground the jolts o electricity; this needle prodded my face. It felt like mutilation, losing battle. I felt defeated. I felt like a traitor to myself, to th cause—as I was beginning to understand it. If the electrolysis was one-time permanent removal, I would have gotten rid of the bear

s not; you have to go back many times). Anyway, I was beginning see my beard as a process, not a medical condition. The questions t arose for me were about my relationship to the outside world; my relationship to my body. About electrolysis I thought: I don't nk I should have to make this change. This is a feminist issue; men's power in relation to their bodies.When I'm asked hormone estions I get angry. It's tedious, patronizing. It's prosthetic advice: u're definitely not all right the way you are; here's how you can nge your defect, become normal. Yes, there have been times that e shaved—to get employment, to travel with Ben and Jerry's cus, but it never really worked for me. There's a beard line that kes me feel embarrassed and nervous. People are thinking, 'That's woman who wants to hid her perfection but she can't.'

I walk around with a tremendous ount of anxiety, but I can't easily barate out "beard anxiety" from neral 'starving artist anxiety" that so ny people I know walk around with. ere have been painful and depressed nes in relation to the beard. For mple, I have a fear of going to the throom in a public place. I always ng someone with me so people can ar my female voice and they won't ok at the beard and say, "What are OU doing in here!" I have to steel self to walk in and be seen. There are nes I literally don't pee. When I'm veling outside of New York I pee in a in the car.

Recently in an airport, I used the n's bathroom for the first time. I just nt in—it seemed less scary than the men's room. When I came out of the ll, a man was at the sink. We looked each other in the mirror and he didn't sp, so I felt somewhat comfortable in ere. Many public places are hard—es in movies, stores—people have the portunity to stare. I have to be so alert the time. It's hard.

"The message from my mother and grandmother was non conformist- be who you are".
-Jennifer Miller

My biggest difficulty is financial—ere are so many jobs I can't get with a beard. I have a desire to ch like my mom and grandmother, but how can I invest in an ucation for myself when I could never get a teaching job with a ard? I did, many years ago, teach in an after school program, but en I stopped for a while, my beard grew fuller. I couldn't return it. It's too hard to approach administrators, to have so many ints against me. So this has definitely affected my choice of work d community. It's also very hard to go to new places, to leave w York. I've often wished things were different. In my 20s, I etty much intellectually withdrew from the straight world, cided not to go to college, not to climb a career ladder. It was ch easier to have my alternative look within an alternative mmunity. It's different for me now: I feel able and eager to rticipate in all kinds of communities.

A few years ago I worked at a Coney Island sideshow as "Zenobia, the Bearded Lady." It was heavy; something I thought I'd never do. But I got to talk about the world being full of women who have beards or at least the potential to have a beard if only they would reach out and live up to this potential. I talk about saving money and energy on waxing, plucking, electrolysis. I let it be known that I choose to let my beard grow; it's not a curse; it's a choice. I educate. I say, "I'm not the Other—I'm You, I'm just bearded."

Interestingly, coming on-stage as the bearded lady wasn't different from people staring at me anyway. But, like gay drag behavior on stage, calling yourself the bearded lady is an empowered response to being looked at. It justifies my being looked at; makes me feel safer, in control of the staring. I can express things with my own timing. I can act instead of react.

There's also the issue of becoming what one looks like. I am so often assumed to be a male on the street, and I respond to that. For that moment I am in fact a male. This widens my construction of my own gender. A woman with a beard is a bigger gender than a woman without a beard. So my character is affected, my interaction with society creates my gender, and I feel consequently that I'm something that's a little different from just a woman.

Being bearded gives me lots of power. Power from feeling I have no secrets, the striving for womanly perfection is over. The power that comes from being liberated from going for anything mainstream. As much as I sometimes WISH pluckers and shavers were at this place with me, I don't think they should do what I do unless they're ready. It's hard to do what I do unless you start when you're young, because it takes many years to grow a full beard, and you have all that time to grow and develop strategies along the way.

Having a beard has given me cause to become radical, of course, to have courage. As I get older, I get more and more committed to the beard. Its fibers are woven in deeply with who I am. The cost of giving it up now is a cost of selfhood. I'm wearing this beard as a political act, because I have some hopes for a changed cultural future. I wear the beard because I intend to effect change with it. Therefore, on some level, I'm teaching, doing political work. I couldn't maintain this very difficult thing if I wasn't coming at it from many angles: a subversive act, a teaching tool, a lifelong conceptual art piece, it's who I am. ❑

A 30-minute film about Jennifer Miller, *Juggling Gender* by Tami Gold, can be rented ($60) through Women Make Movies (212-925-0606; FAX: 212-925-2052). Jennifer also, for a fee, shows the film herself and talks to audiences afterwards. To book her, call: 718-486-7432. CIRCUS AMOK, Jennifer's traveling one-ring circus, can be booked at the same number.

LILITH readers: You've let us know that you particularly treasure, and find empowering, articles about Jewish foremothers—from biblical matriarchs through 20th century heroines. From time to time, therefore, we'll be highlighting such material under the banner "Foremothers." Do save these articles—eventually you'll have your own Jewish "motherline" reader.

TWO MONOLOGUES: BY ZEISE WILD WOLF

I AM LEAH, ADONAY,

and my eyes are weak. All my life I have been not right—weak of eyes instead of beautiful of form, weak of eyes instead of beautiful to see; an eldest girl instead of an eldest boy, an eldest girl instead of a youngest girl. Even Rakhel [Rachel], Adonay, my baby sister, who loved me in our earliest years, felt bitterness toward me in the end. Even Ya'akov [Jacob], husband by my own father's design, believed I had helped to trick him, Adonay, and despised me to the end.

Only my children saw me, Adonay, and only they and my handmaid Zilpah loved and cared for me. In many ways, Adonay, I am a weak woman, but I am strong in love, and I love until death—a dangerous combination, Adonay, perhaps most dangerous in a woman. For I loved my sister Rakhel and I loved Ya'akov, but me they did not love. My eyes are weak but I see much, Adonay, and though I tried to make a place for myself, Adonay, I never belonged in my own home.

From the beginning you saw my pain and did what you could to help me. You opened my womb and gave me seven children, Adonay, and you made my Rakhel barren for many years. But even this could not help me, Adonay, and the names of my children tell my story. By their names I say prayers, Adonay. Through their names I tell my people the story of my heart:

For the biblical antecedents of this story, see Genesis 29-35.

R'euven, meaning "may my husband please love me." Shim'on, "God has heard that I am hated." Levi, "*now* my husband will join me." But three sons to no avail. Thus I left off hoping and "I praised you," Adonay, in Y'hudah—for you stayed by me when I was otherwise alone.

And when much later I birthed again, Adonay, I "cleared my debt" with Y'ssachar, for Zilpah my maid had already birthed Gad and Asher on my behalf. I prayed one last time with Z'vulun, "let my husband love me, dwell with me," but with Dinah, my final child, I accepted your "judgment." I have given to Ya'akov as much as Zilpah and Rakhel and Rakhel's maid Bilhah all together—six sons, Adonay—but I have not received my husband's love. May my story be heard.

I learned to draw sustenance from what I received, Adonay. Above everything, I gained satisfaction in my handmaid Zilpah and the love of my children, especially, Adonay, in the love of my firstborn, R'euven. R'euven, R'euven. My first hope, my last hope. Who but R'euven would bring mandrakes for me to make Ya'akov

love me . . . who but R'euven would see with clear eyes that my husband did not love me? R'euven hurt for me, Adonay. In his heart there was pain for the loneliness of his mother, and he brought comfort to me, Adonay, like no one else. If only that he saw me was enough.

Many of the nights that I was alone, Adonay, I tried to understand why Rakhel and Ya'akov hated me as they did. Perhaps their hatred was closer to guilt. Inside, did Rakhel perhaps feel badly for me, Adonay, so lonely without love—in a tent only calling distance from her own? When we were little children, Adonay, we had a story between us that we told over and over, of the man who would come and love us both, because we would not stand to be parted. Maybe she was sad, Adonay, if she remembered our story. Maybe she cried, Adonay, because we had our one man and he separated us more than two men from different tribes could ever have done.

Did she weep, Adonay, that we came to say nothing together but bitter words? Or perhaps her hatred was really anger, Adonay, that I bore six sons and a daughter, and she only two sons, and only at the very end, Adonay, after more than twenty barren years. But it is also possible, Adonay, that she saw nothing at all, how else could she have taken those mandrakes from me, granting me in exchange but a single night—only one—with my own husband?

AS CHILDREN, WE HAD A STORY BETWEEN US THAT WE TOLD OVER AND OVER, OF A MAN WHO WOULD COME SOME DAY AND LOVE US BOTH, BECAUSE WE COULD NOT STAND TO BE PARTED.

Now, since Rakhel has died, Adonay, Ya'akov speaks with me, but my nights are no less lonely. One night, however, Adonay, Ya'akov called to me from the tent door in a hesitant voice, and I let him in with gentleness. He told me his story of Esav, his brother, of whom I know only a little, only that which poured then from my husband's mouth.

Now on lonely nights, Adonay, I think of how Ya'akov bought his brother's birthright, with a bowl of lentils and some bread. Ya'akov cried to tell it, Adonay, and I comforted him, but only with my arms. For that night,in my heart, Adonay, I finally understood. They are of one way--Ya'akov and Rakhel. Esav and I are of another. Esav traded his life for a single bowl of food; I traded my mandrakes--my chance for love--for a single night with my husband. And I cry, Adonay, for the cycles that turn. And I pray in my heart, Adonay, that the circles you spin are for the good.

I AM RAKHEL, ADONAY.

I went to the well one morning and saw with my own eyes the man who would be my husband, many years hence. I knew I wanted him, and I received what I wanted. But I did not receive what I wanted in the way that I wanted it.

When I was very young my mother died. I cried and cried but my mother did not live again, and Leah my sister loved me and raised me and comforted me, so that after a time I loved Leah in my mother's place.

Leah and I had a story we used to tell again and again, that one day a man would arrive at our house and he would marry us both and we would live with him, all of us together, all of us happy. But when I saw Ya'akov, I knew this story to be impossible. I loved Ya'akov. When he kissed me I knew he loved me too, and Leah would need to find someone else. How could I have known that my father Laban would make this impossible? Father, Father. A more stupid man never was. All of Leah's pain is from Father, though she thinks it is I, and perhaps Ya'akov, who are to blame.

But we loved each other, Ya'akov and I. Loved and understood each other. We thought the same, planned the same, were, so it sometimes felt, of one flesh. What could we do? Not love each other? That would have been as impossible as asking the wind to stop blowing. And it would have been absurd. Then no one would have been happy, and at least the way we loved, Ya'akov and I had our moments. But even those were few, as Father had guaranteed.

Many children were not my due, though I longed with all my soul to bear fruit like Leah, to fill the tent with little men, their sweet voices and faces everywhere I looked. But no, instead to Leah and Ya'akov seven, and six of them boys! But to me not even one for many many years, and then precious, dear to my heart Yosef. And years later, so many years later, another—and he on my deathbed.

Ya'akov loved me, he didn't care how many children I had for him. But I cared. The only time Ya'akov became angry with me was when I cried out to him—Give me children! Then he knew I hadn't yet taken his Adonay to be my God. To make me "pay," he took Bilhah and she conceived and birthed. Then I knew you, Adonay, but still Ya'akov took Bilhah once again, and again she conceived and birthed. After that a little time passed, and then we were once again happy.

I didn't want to hurt Leah, but why did she have to make everything so hard? She knew that Ya'akov loved me—why did she try and try to make him love her?

"Rachel and Leah" from the series "Women of the Torah: Images in Clay" by Sarah Hartman of Huntington Woods,Michigan.

Foolish woman, she thought herbs could bring her Ya'akov's love, but mandrakes bring babies, not love—everyone knows that. I needed them more than she. And then how she used to say that Ya'akov was *her* husband! He was my husband, and hers only from deceit. Didn't she know that?

One evening, though, I passed by her tent and I heard her crying. Listening, I thought it was my own heart that had broken. I suddenly remembered a time when we were very young. Father had punished me and I cried so hard that my head throbbed. Leah heard me and came to my bed and rocked me, singing her sweet, soft songs. Remembering this, I wanted so to enter her tent and comfort her as she had so often comforted me in childhood. But then I thought—for what? I am the cause of all her pain! What could I do for her? And so instead I returned to my tent and cried myself to sleep, also uncomforted.

It was from that evening and because I knew I was on my deathbed even as I breathed life into this world—that I named my second son Ben-Oni, son of my unhappiness. Of course Ya'akov changed the name. What did he know, really? I tried to leave in my last child's name a reminder, a marker, a warning perhaps: son of my unhappiness. But Ya'akov wanted, in our last child's name, to tell his own story.

I died after a sad life, Adonay, still full with desires, of a god who stayed always a little strange to me, married to a man for whom I waited fourteen years and then shared with three others. I paid for childbirth with death, Adonay, and died so far from the heart of my sister. I died in the desert, Adonay, and was buried along the way.❑

Zeise Wild Wolf lives and writes in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

FOUR MATRIARCHS? MAKE THAT SIX

"Now the sons of Jacob were Twelve in number. The sons of **Leah**—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun. The sons of **Rachel**—Joseph and Benjamin. The sons of **Bilhah**—Dan and Naphtali. The sons of **Zilpah**—Gad and Asher. These are the sons of Jacob." [Genesis 35: 22-26]

It's been only a scant 3500 years or so since the deaths of our biblical Matriarchs (*z"l*), so it might come as a surprise to find equality-creep already affecting a few of our more liberal synagogues. In the Hebrew *Amidah* prayer [a core set of blessings], after the usual address to the "God of our Patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," a *davener* might now find a newly inserted phrase addressed to that more bashful deity, He [sic] of our "Matriarchs—Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah." Some of us come face-to-face with this ontogeny routinely, so it no longer knocks our *tefillin* off.

A funny thing happens, though, on the way to the Fourum. As we begin gender-fixing the liturgy, we suddenly notice—as is the case with the application of *any* political Band-Aid—a whole new body of booboos that somehow just weren't *there* before. The Four Matriarchs are a case in point, because there aren't four of them, **there are six**. (See *Numbers Rabbah* 12:17, for example, where the rabbis refer matter-of-factly to our "Six Matriarchs.") How did <u>two</u> get so emphatically forgotten?

The Six are: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah. The latter are Leah's and Rachel's "female attendants," but they were included as Matriarchs not because of that—rather, because of their ova. Bilhah and Zilpah follow Jacob into his tent (presumably to see his sand etchings), and emerge with four tribal blastocysts: Bilhah births Dan and Naphtali; and Zilpah, Gad and Asher. These four sand-eating toddlers represent one-third of the Twelve Tribes.

Six Matriarchs makes theological sense if we but step back and remember for a moment what makes the Twelve Tribes important anyway. Historical confederations aside, the Jewish tradition has continually used the iconology of Twelve Tribes to drum into our heads a core concept: our people's invention of democracy. <u>All</u> biological Jews are descended from these original half-brothers, our tradition wants us to know. We all count, we all count equally. The Twelve Tribes are intended to sear into our hearts a Jewish ethical ideal of inclusivity.

A midrash (*Exodus Rabbah* 1:6) makes this point directly: When the Twelve Tribes are mentioned, why aren't they always enumerated in the same order, the midrash asks rhetorically. And it answers: to teach the lesson of democracy—that we're all equal, wife and handmaid (and by extension, born-Jew and convert), child of Leah, or child of Zilpah, of Rachel or of Bilhah.

We understand that leaving out the two matriarchs who are "female attendants" doesn't sit well with feminist *or* Jewish values. Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah are all from privileged, well-to-do stock (some argue that they are even royalty)—they're <u>not</u> the nannies. Excising Bilhah and Zilpah institutionalizes as 'kosher' a kind of Upstairs/Downstairs.

When we rewrite the *Amidah* to include Bilhah and Zilpah (as we now must surely do), we introduce into our prayers a different ethic of decency. Carol Gilligan has said that, "Justice is the highest value in masculine morality, but women's morality places a higher value on an ethic of care, whose premise is that no one should be hurt." How does the inclusion of two handmaids speak to that?

—Rabbi Susan Schnur

REVIEWS

ix Flavors of Jewish War

WAR IN THE HEBREW BIBLE: A STUDY IN THE ETHICS OF VIOLENCE
by Susan Niditch [Oxford University Press, 1993], $32.00

War, in Hebrew Scriptures, is a complicated affair. The stereotype of it, however, is fairly predictably oversimplified. "Old Testament" war means, stereotypically, the "extirpation ideal" [herem]—that is, the total annihilation of [the] enemy regardless of age, gender or military status. Mercy has no place here. To understand the "sense" of this model requires a heavy-duty non-presentist stretch: annihilating one's enemies represents a deal" with God. We'll give You, God, what You want (we know you're a blood devourer who appreciates human sacrifice); You give us what we want: military victory.

This "total annihilation of the enemy" model of biblical war became the rationale for sanctioned brutalities for millennia [that] ... though the belief in a sacrifice-loving deity [is] no longer in any way supported the ideology). Cotton Mather used King James' electric, intense cadences to whip New England Puritans into a frenzy of Indian ("Amalek," in Mather's word) killing. U.S. preachers, well into the 18th century, conducted campaigns against native Americans which they called "extirpations of the enemies of Israel and Canaan." In Europe, Christians led what were called "justified" crusades against Saracens and Jews by summoning this biblical "ideal." One contemporary scholar, James Turner Johnson, goes so far as to characterize, disturbingly, such war ideologies as "fundamentally Hebrew and Jewish."

Susan Niditch points out, however, in War in the Hebrew Bible, that while this conception of war conforms snugly to other stereotypes of the so-called "Old" Testament (that is, that Jewish morality is underdeveloped and wrongheaded, championing law instead of gospel, justice instead of mercy, judgment instead of love), it is patently incorrect to put forward the extirpation ideal as the only ancient Israelite model for collective aggression.

Niditch, a professor of religion at Amherst College, presents at least five other typologies of war. First (after the extirpation ideal) comes the tradition of non-participation ("wait for a miracle; God loves a helpless people"); second, there's the ideology of tricksterism, which is a guerrilla warfare-type strategy of the weak (re: the Samson story, Dinah and the Shechemites, Jael, Ehud). Third, there's the model of expediency employed by the powerful (war as brutal "business as usual" in which "all is fair"). Fourth, there's the "priestly ideology of war," in which everyone is annihilated but virgin girls, reflecting, interestingly, a post-monarchic emphasis on "clean" and "unclean" (even Israelite soldiers, according to this model, become unclean through killing—an odd acknowledgment of the enemy's humanity). This latter ideal of war is different from the Deuteronomic "extirpation ideal" in which the annihilated enemy are "sinners"—here the priests are concerned with purification, not sin.

Lastly, Niditch presents a bardic stylized tradition of war—most probably originating in the royal courts of Judah—which puts forth an "aristocratic, prettified" view of battle, in which warriors' courage and skill are made glamorous. In this model, "men fight only their equals," and war becomes a sport in which there's a kind of boys' code of fair play.

For contemporary women readers who may experience all kinds of war—no matter what flavor—as bizarre and simply puzzling, this scholarly book more than gratifies other personal, as well as intellectual, interests. Niditch addresses Jewish texts' genuine grappling with issues of compassion and enmity, and the deep paradoxes implicit in the biblical ethics of violence. These explorations give us a new, rich context for the war-and-peace questions plaguing contemporary Israel, as well as a context for the conflicts within each of us—between empathy, fear and loathing.

In Niditch's sweet and glancingly personal conclusion, she relates the rabbinic story in which God silences the angels at the

lot Jewish Sex

Since our own sex lives are great, of course, we at LILITH weren't feeling terribly motivated to plow through the new, fat and monumentally boring findings of the National Health and Social Life Survey concerning sex (boiled down into a mere 700+ pages, including [the] charts and dotted graphs, called *The Social Organization of Sexuality*, by [Laumann, Gagnon, Michael and Michaels]). Lucky for us, though, Anthony Lake compacted the material into five short pages of heady foreplay in The New Yorker. The stunning truth, according to Laumann et alia: "Americans are not having much partnered sex at all."

Jews, however, present a different story. Writes Lake about the general dearth of sex in our society (and the one exception to this rule):

I found myself scouting rather desperately through the pie charts for a slice of the American people to keep me company in my meagre history of transgressions. Help arrived in the form of Jewish lovers, who continue to fizz, so I learned, with an erotic excitement denied to those of other faiths, and whose recorded achievements returned me to a comforting state of Protestant inadequacy. The Jewish male is almost the only predator still roaming the prairie of intercourse, and his choicest mate—no surprise here—remains the Well-Read Girl. "Twice as many women who went to college have given or received oral sex as compared to those who did not finish high school, and twice as many of these better-educated women had or received oral sex the last time they had sex."

So, it was good for us. Now how about a little post-coital Steinsaltz Talmud?

Red Sea—they are chanting in jubilation after the Israelites have escaped Egypt. Why does God silence them? Because many Egyptians have drowned as a result of the miracle of the parted waters, and no one should rejoice at that.

Niditch then explains the Passover tradition of spilling a drop of wine from one's cup as each plague is recited (the idea being to diminish one's cup of joy), and she recalls how "someone in my family always says, 'Remember how Pa used to cry at the plagues?'"

She continues. "My grandfather would participate in a sort of ritual wailing for the Egyptians, an action counterpart for the midrashic story about God's staying the angels' song. There were causes in his own life for sadness, and perhaps in his crying he identified with the Egyptians and found release, reaching out beyond the community of Israel to the community of humankind, bonded by Job-like experiences and the rocky relationships all of us have with powerful forces of authority—familiar, political, and divine."

—Susan Schnur

IGNORANT ARMIES
by Karen Alkalay-Gut. [Cross-Cultural Communications, Merrick, NY., 1994], $5.00

The title of Karen Alkalay-Gut's earthy and poignant book of poems comes from Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," and the poet's plea is "Ah, love, let us be true/ to one another" in a world where "ignorant armies clash by night." It is an appropriate motto for a poet who was born during the London blitz of émigré parents barely escaped from Danzig, who grew up, studied in America, and who has lived and taught American Literature at Tel Aviv University since 1977. Love and war are two of her chief subjects, though she romanticizes neither and tends to be rueful about both. "Ah, love," she writes in "Herzlia Beach: December 1988," lying on the sand licking the lover's salty skin, "I feel the whole of paradise on my tongue." At the same time, as she well knows,

> Further inland the earth is heaving
> Overturned by entire generations dying
> For the taste of this sand.

To live as a normal woman in the la of Israel sometimes means cooking for dinner party while listening to radio ne of a suicide bomber ("Domestic Dinner" Sometimes ("Mabrouk") it mea watching a TV documentary of an Ar wedding, "and when Azziza and Jam look at each other—slowly, shyly— begin to cry." Or it might mean helpi your daughter, the night before h mobilization, pack socks, underwear, "a a funny doll / God knows / where she w hide" ("Mobilization"). Or checking o laundry on neighboring balconies a knowing by how "White squares flap / the lines above the heavy green shirt that a boy is home from the wars and baby's been born ("Home From t Wars"). And then again, there are t sensuous pleasures of "these streets white light," where "old men napping boulevard benches / smell of the sea," a street cats stare at you imperiouss ("Returning to Tel Aviv").

Not all the poems in this book take pla in Israel. Several are tributes to the poet's

(continued on page 3

PASSOVER ANTICIPATION

This pre-Passover, while browning farfel and peeling yams, LILITH suggests the mood-setting company of storyteller Judith Black. Her two new audiotapes, Waiting for Elijah and Adult Children of . . . Parents, stir us into warm holiday anticipation. Both tapes, appropriate for adults and children, are very funny, and sometimes quite moving.

In one selection on Waiting for Elijah, Black impersonates a young girl up in her bedroom before the Seder, fantasizing about the dreaded relatives' imminent arrival. Setting the Pesach table with her mother, stealing some Barton's chocolates to eat on her bedspread, the girl is surprised because suddenly everything changes—now that she's 13. Another tale is a wistful rendition of Isaac Peretz's Yiddish story about Elijah visiting a shtetl. Side Two: One long tale told by Miriam the Prophet as a very old grandmother. Miriam recounts the Exodus According To Her, and she shleps us right beside her through the nasty wilderness. As the Hagaddah requires—we ourselves emigrate vividly from Egypt.

The second tape is a more generic evocation of suburban Jewish-American experience, though it still nicely accompanies skimming chicken soup and chopping walnuts. Black tells stories as a new arrivee to middle age: about her phone conversations with her aging Floridian parents; about her childhood bedroom—desperate refuge from agonizing reality; about Passover; and about becoming, herself, an aging Jewish parent.

Judith Black is also available for storytelling performances on all sorts of Jewish and social action themes: tales of greenhorns, Mother Jones' unionizing, midrash and faith, and more. To order these tapes (that so feel like our own experience), send $11.50 for Waiting for Elijah and/or $13.50 for Adult Children of . . . Parents to: Judith Black, 33 Prospect St., Marblehead, MA 01945. 617-631-4417

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The Story of "Hannah's Gift" is taken from the new children's book (for 3 to 7 year olds) Eve and Her Sisters by the mother/daughter, illustrator/writer team Malcah Zeldis and Yona Zeldis McDonough [Greenwillow Books, 1994]. Each page features a biblical woman—14 in all. Though the narratives could certainly be more feminist, the stronger lesson consists of simply searing these ɔmen's names into our children's hearts and memories (we emorize, after all, "by heart"), so that they can riff in their ep as readily as Ring Around the Rosie—"Eve! Sarah! Hagar! ebecca! Rachel! Leah! Yokheved! Miriam! Deborah! Jael! ıth! Hannah! Abigail! Queen of Sheba! Esther!"

—*Susan Schnur*

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A JEWISH ART OF LISTENING?

We've been wanting to call your attention to a new book on the interface between Judaism and Buddhism—Rodger Kamenetz's The Jew in the Lotus: A Poet's Rediscovery of Jewish Identity in Buddhist India (HarperSanFrancisco, 1994). The book documents a trek to the Dalai Lama by Jews who wanted to share with him clues about how a people can maintain religion and culture in exile. Two women we know—Blu Greenberg and Joy Levitt—were among the eleven Jews on the journey. In a recent issue of the journal The Reconstructionist, Levitt, a congregational rabbi, describes a most instructive experience on the trip

For an hour at a time, the Dalai Lama listened with an intensity that comes from several hours of meditation each day. More than any other single attribute (including his charming sense of humor, his remarkable humility and his simple acts of kindness), it was his manner of listening that overwhelmed me. The Jewish art of dialogue, at least as I have understood it, involves thinking of what you're going to say when the other person finishes talking, which he rearely gets to do because you usually interrupt him. I had never experienced the kind of deep listening that the Tibetans practice, and I noticed that it changed the way we spoke. I found myself wanting to say exactly what I meant, speaking more carefully because I knew that each word would be heard and appreciated.

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(continued from page 28)

parents, and memories of her father dying-"in exile / again"—and her mother exhaustion: "'Is he breathing?' she aske me. 'Go check.'" In "Keepers of M Youth," the poet visits a Jewish Old Ag Home where her old neighbors an teachers—"those who can speak and whos minds are clear"—reminisce, while she see them in Jonathan Swift's words, as "th barriers between me and death:"

> Her I am in my flower. With a gentle hand
> I smooth the shawls around her shoulders
> tuck the bright wool blankets into their
> chairs,
> and whisper encouraging farewells to
> the troops at the front."

For a poet like Alkalay-Gut, a littl humor is a survival strategy, but it neve erases tenderness. One of my favorite poem in this book remembers the Rebbe in th *folkshule* of her youth, to whom, in Yiddish she explained Darwin and asked his opinion She was eleven; it was eleven years after th Holocaust. The rabbi rocks gently and produces his decision: "Bobbe-mysehs," h says—old-wives-tales. "You learn what yo

Tsirl Waletzky

JEWISH WOMEN'S LITERARY ANNUAL LAUNCHED

By the Jewish Women's Resource Center

If you liked SARA'S DAUGHTERS SING . . . people all over the country have been nudging us at our poetry readings: "Nu, when are you getting out the sequel? The sequel, dear readers, is THE JEWISH WOMEN'S LITERARY ANNUAL. As good as the Georgia Review, but appearing once a year and edited by Jewish women. The first issue, out now, celebrates the Centennial of our dear mother, National Council of Jewish Women New York Section. Established voices like those of Alicia Ostriker and Enid Dame have contributed work and work in progress. New voices in fiction, poetry and prose essay forms sing out at the start of their literary careers.

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t for school," he explains, "but of course
ne can really / believe in such stories."
n this poem, belief and unbelief go hand
and for Alkalay-Gut, like love and loss,
espair and hope, or guilt and happiness.
gnorant Armies is Alkalay-Gut's fifth
of poems, and the second published by
ss-Cultural Communications. The first,
hitza, appeared in 1986; others have
published in Israel. Stanley Barkan, the
lisher of Cross-Cultural Comm-
ations, has a whole series of poetry
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—Alicia Ostriker

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Saturday, October 28, 1995
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This first feminist North American conference to focus on women's contributions to yidishkayt and Yiddish culture (traditional and secular), art, politics and intellectual discourse will include the participation of women artists, scholars, activists and Yiddish speakers.

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Mailing list for registration: **JEWISH WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER**
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READING RUTH: CONTEMPORARY WOMEN RECLAIM A SACRED STORY
edited by Judith Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer [Ballantine Books, 1994], $23.00

Here 30 women take back the biblical book of Ruth—at last! In essays, poetry, fiction, verse-by-verse commentary, and personal narrative, the authors explore different facets of this quintessential female story. Topics rummaged include the bond between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, the heartache of loss, the limitations of loyalty, fertility and tragedy, the power of women's friendship, and Naomi as Job. Among the contributors are Sylvia Rothchild, Marge Piercy, Tamar Frankiel, Aviva Zornberg and Cynthia Ozick. A depth experience for Shavuot.

WOMEN OF THE WORD: JEWISH WOMEN AND JEWISH WRITING
edited by Judtith Baskin [Wayne State University Press], $18.95

Combining feminist theory, biography, history, psychology and literary criticism, Baskin's book brings to life the courage, fears, talents and painful confusion experienced by Jewish women writers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Seventeen essays by well-known Jewish academics (including Anne Lapidus Lerner, Janet Burstein, Yael Feldman and Carol Kessner) introduce the reader to such issues as the images of women in medieval Hebrew literature; Jewish American women's stories of the 1920s; the shared passions of Emma Lazarus, Marie Syrkin and Cynthia Ozick; and the "feminists under siege" mentality of many contemporary Israeli women writers. Jewish women writers have created a stunning and rich literature.

GOD'S PHALLUS: AND OTHER PROBLEMS FOR MEN AND MONOTHEISM
by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz [Beacon Press, 1994], $27.50

A groundbreaking, clearly written, feminist, emotionally honest piece of scholarship whose time has come. We know what problems the idea of a male God inflicts on women, but what problems does He inflict on men? Eilberg-Schwartz explains the development of Judeo-Christian theology—goddess cults, idolatry as adultery, the Christian God fathering Jesus and thus rendering the human father irrelevant, queer fear, misogyny, God as really distant—through an understanding of how an invented

male God creates sexual anxieties for men.

For women it's tautological that the Judeo-Christian God has a penis—after all, we call God "He," what else would he have? But beyond Judaism's legitimization of male authority through this act of creating a God in men's (not women's) image, Eilberg-Schwartz argues that a male God makes human males redundant, and causes them to sacrifice their masculinity to Him (that's what circumcision is). *God's Phallus* is a tour-de-force, and a ripe challenge to feminists to take the next step: to truly work to separate out the oppressive "male God" from the less examined "father God," as well as from other Gods. Eilberg-Schwartz imagines that there's a new liberating theology on the horizon—a fabulous polymorphously perverse pantheon. An absolute must-read..

JEWISH COOKING IN AMERICA
by Joan Nathan [Knopf, 1994], $30.00

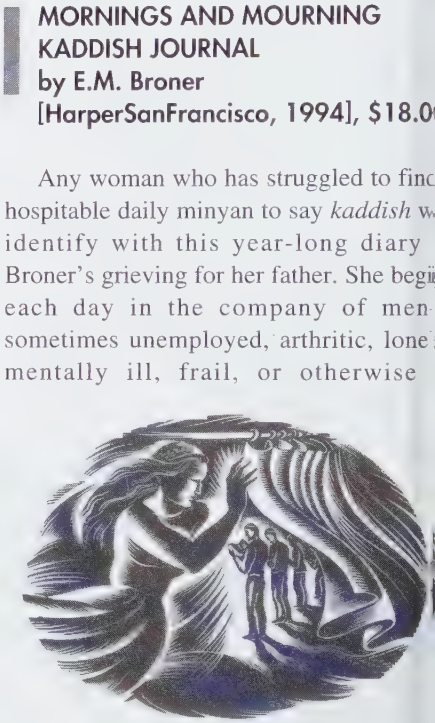
Not just 300 recipes (nouvelle and classic, Sephardic and Ashkenazic), but real Jewish-American social history at its most fun and least pedantic. Who among us does not want to know the entire, unexpurgated Jewish story behind bialys, Haagen-Dazs, Crisco, Fleischmann's yeast, Dr. Brown's Cel-Ray Tonic, lox, or Philadelphia cream cheese? Definitely a terrific gift.

HER FIRST AMERICAN
by Lore Segal [The New Press, 1994], $11.95

This 1985 novel (reissued by a nonprofit publisher) stars a resilient 22-year-old woman who has survived the Holocaust. She comes to New York and meets America in the corpulent form of a middle-aged African-Americ intellectual. Their closeness, the conversations, his helpless drinking, h attempts to make sense of English, the l of Black and Jewish intellectuals in t 1950s—are all wonderfully rendere Alongside this plot runs a story, a waki nightmare actually, of Holocaust survivo The young woman, after explaining h childhood of fleeing and hiding, crossi and recrossing Europe alone as a ve young girl, says understatedly to h gracious lover, "So you see, you need n cross me over the street into the subway."

MORNINGS AND MOURNING KADDISH JOURNAL
by E.M. Broner [HarperSanFrancisco, 1994], $18.0

Any woman who has struggled to finc hospitable daily minyan to say *kaddish* w identify with this year-long diary Broner's grieving for her father. She begi each day in the company of men sometimes unemployed, arthritic, lone mentally ill, frail, or otherwise



transition—who constantly rearrange *mehitza* to remind Broner that she is unwelcome intruder. Their antics, a hers—she invites a group of notab feminist friends to accompany her o Sunday to lend her moral support—a almost comic and often full of the pathos humanity.

WIDOW'S WALK: ONE WOMAN'S S SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL JOURNEY TO A NEW LIFE
by Anne Hosansky [Donald Fine Pub., 1994], $19.95

A beautiful, 4-handkerchief account adjusting to widowhood (after 39 years marriage) by a woman who, because she married at 18, missed that earlier rite-

sage: going from parents' home to
pendent young adulthood. Now
ansky must master two journeys at once.
book's end, however, she's on her feet.
n grateful for all those years I was so
-loved," she writes, "but the woman
used to be married now seems like a
l in many ways. There's so much else in
' Hosansky's conclusion: "It is, after all,
od century in which to be a woman." A
suring read for any newish widow.

**VOMAN AND THE ISRAELI
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Routledge Press, 1994], $16.95**

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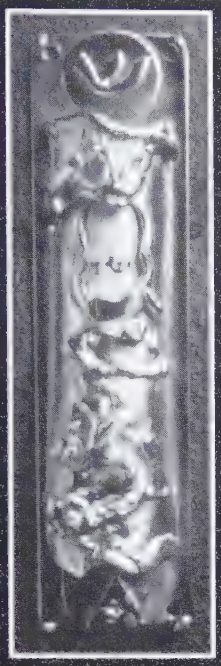

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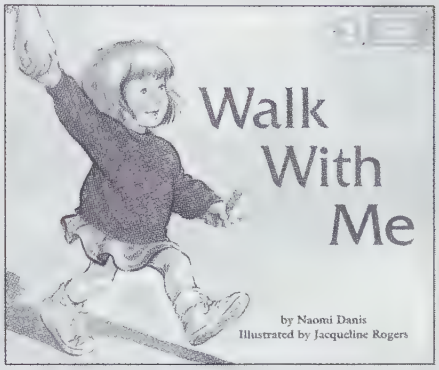

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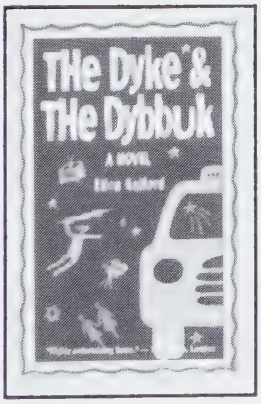

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"Extremely funny...Galford is hilarious as she spins out her unlikely but strangely believable plot. The writing is **beguiling** throughout." – *Newsday*

The Dyke and the Dybbuk by Ellen Galford is available at your local bookstore or from Seal Press (206) 283-7844.

THE *SHAYTL* & SUSAN B. ANTHONY

(continued from p. 13)

Rabbi Michaelson rushed to the telephone terribly upset. When his wife's pressure began to climb, it was dangerous.

Fortunately, Dr. Kampleman was in his office, which was a few doors from the Michaelson house. He came right over. He took Mrs. Michaelson's blood pressure. It was 220.

"She'll need complete bed rest," Dr. Kampleman said. "She'll have to stay in bed until her pressure goes down." Rabbi Michaelson helped Mrs. Michaelson upstairs. He had trouble looking at her—he felt guilty. Maybe there was some truth to her complaints about the *shaytl*. Maybe it was too heavy; maybe it had something to do with blood pressure. Her blood pressure did rise to these dangerous heights, and Dr. Kampleman had warned that high pressure could cause a stroke.

Mrs. Michaelson just lay there. The bedroom was hot, too, but removing her *shaytl* had helped, and getting out of that kitchen had helped too. She knew she would be in bed for a few days. Her blood pressure went up quickly, but it was hard to bring down.

Rabbi Michaelson came up with some iced tea. Mrs. Michaelson said she felt better. Her head felt much lighter without the wig. "If only I could go to New York—to Madame Marie's. If I had had a light wig, this wouldn't have happened."

Rabbi Michaelson was nervous about his wife's condition, and he knew he mustn't upset her. Nevertheless, he lost control.

"I give up!" He started shouting once again. "You want a *shaytl* from Madame Marie, have one! God knows where I'll find the money, but go! Go! Call Rifkeh. Stay with them. Go! Go to New York and buy yourself a new wig. Take the train—Go! Here's the money," and he opened the dresser drawer where he kept various wallets filled with cash. "Two hundred dollars—Go! And maybe there will be some *sholem bayis* here! A meal without Susan B. Anthony. That's all I needed, her and her suffragettes!" Rabbi Michaelson stormed from the room.

Mrs. Michaelson was shocked that her husband had handed over the money. She didn't wait to discuss it for fear that he would change his mind. She called her sister-in-law, Rivkeh, to say she was coming. She would take the early morning train a week from next Monday. Rivkeh would meet her, and they would go directly to Madame Marie. They would then travel to Brooklyn. She would spend the night, and return to Baltimore the next day.

Mrs. Michaelson recovered in a few days. On the train to New York, she wondered why her husband had given in this time when he had refused so many other times. He must have been moved by her illness. "Maybe I could have gone further; maybe I could have given up the wig altogether," she thought.

When the train arrived in New York, Rivkeh was waitin "She's 38, but she looks 70," thought Mrs. Michaelson as sl waved from the train window. "Madame Marie's wares aren doing her much good."

The experience at Madame Marie's was not what Mr Michaelson had envisioned. There was a very fancy waiting loun and display cases, but a wig was a wig—and there was a look abo the wigs of the Orthodox women that, no matter what, was alwa the same. More disappointing, Madame Marie was unable to mat Mrs. Michaelson's natural hair as well as she would have liked. S wanted something more auburn. But they either had flaming re which she didn't like at all, or a reddish brown, which couldn compare to the natural color of her hair. It just was not like wearin your own hair. There was always that gap, alas, between the w line and the back of the neck—the gap whi revealed that you were wearing a *shaytl*.

> "IT'S PUBIC HAIR THAT HAS TO BE COVERED UP," SAID THE *REBETSN*. "ONLY THE SANHEDRIN WOULD GET CONFUSED AND INCLUDE ALL HAIR."

After a number of trials, Mrs. Michaelso chose something. Rivkeh said it w marvelous. Mrs. Michaelson saw that it was improvement over what she was wearing, b it still made her look just the same as eve Orthodox woman in a wig. Hopefully wh the wig was made to her head size, it wou look better. It had to be made to order, a would be sent to Baltimore in a month.

It was just 3 o'clock, but Mrs. Michaelso decided she was too depressed to face h brother in Brooklyn—he was even mo doctrinaire than her husband. She would e something at Farm Food, and then retu home. Though Rivkeh tried to persuade Mr Michaelson to stay over, she would n change her mind.

She was not feeling the way she had thought she would. The was no surge of elation. She was soon to be an Orthodox wom of fashion! She would have a custom-made shaytl from Ne York, from Madame Marie—what she had always said sh wanted. But now, it was not what she wanted.

Rabbi Michaelson was delighted to see the taxi that brought M Michaelson home from the train station a day early. He did not li Mrs. Michaelson to spend the night away from him. He was, howeve concerned about Mrs. Michaelson's quiet sad mood. She explain that she was tired, that it had been a long day, and went to bed.

The next day Mrs. Michaelson served her husband his usu breakfast when he returned from the morning prayers at th synagogue. She cleared and washed the dishes and started to co the dinner. She cleaned the house, then told her husband that s had some errands downtown. She took the trolley car to Howar and Lexington, crossed the street, and entered Hutzler department store.

Going directly to the scarf department, she asked for scarv that could be tied into turbans. She bought six in colors that wou match her dresses, dark ones, as her dresses were ve conservative. She brought them home and practiced tying turban

nging them so a few waves of her hair would show out. She ght this looked much better than a *shaytl*.

Mrs. Michaelson meant this to be a lighter, more attractive stitute for her old *shaytl* until the Madame Marie article ved. In the weeks before her new wig was delivered, Mrs. haelson learned that no one paid attention to what she had on head. Everyone thought that she was wearing a wig under the an. Her hair grew longer, and little by little she exposed a few e waves. Mrs. Michaelson was feeling better. She had no more laches, and she was certain that her blood pressure was down.

When the package from Madame Marie's arrived, Mrs. haelson buried it deep in her lingerie drawer. She never took it She just kept wearing her turbans. She felt that a tremendous umbrance had been lifted from her. And this feeling was wed every time she reached into her drawer for a corset and the soft wig there.

Rabbi Michaelson knew that Mrs. Michaelson wasn't wearing *shaytl*. She was keeping her hair covered in public and no one noticed that her own hair was underneath, so he decided not to tion the subject. She did look much better and was much pier and healthier. He was worried about one thing, though, hopefully this wouldn't come up for years, and by then maybe ould persuade his wife to wear her wig again. The cemetery Rabbi Michaelson was expecting to be buried in when he died a very Orthodox one where all the most pious Jewish were ed. All the women who were buried there had worn wigs n they were alive. Would Mrs. Michaelson be allowed to be ed beside him if she hadn't worn a wig in her lifetime? It ld be terrible if Mrs. Michaelson couldn't be beside him.

Rabbi Michaelson knew that he should discuss this with Mrs. haelson immediately and try to persuade her to wear her *ytl*, but he was so attracted by Mrs. Michaelson's new look, he didn't want to start another fight. Besides, they were still ng. He would postpone this worry about cemeteries and nity. He would wait a while yet before broaching the subject ternity with Mrs. Michaelson. ❑

Postscript: This is how Mrs. Michaelson's story would have ed had she lived in the 60s, 70s or 80s. However, this all urred in the 30s and 40s, just a few decades too early.

What really happened was that Mrs. Michaelson did travel to v York for a *shaytl* at Madame Marie's. She bought the ans, but wore them only at home. Mrs. Michaelson wore her wig when she went out. She despised it as much as she had old one and argued furiously with her husband for the rest of life about its suppressive effects.

She transmitted her feelings about wigs to her three Orthodox ghters. They were "liberated"—none of them ever wore a *ytl*. Mrs. Michaelson died in 1955, at age 62, of a stroke caused extremely high blood pressure. She was my mother. — *I.G.*

ne Glassgold is a learning specialist in private practice living Riverdale, NY. She began writing at age 55.

Black~Jewish Daughter

(continued from page 21)

Lisa Jones

PHOTO CREDIT: COREEN SIMPSON

elected to take), the toll of slavery, and the costs of remaining. It's all in the hair.

Which is how I happened upon Charlene's, a place where women can go 24 hours a day to get their hair done. The idea titillates me to no end: a place where you can go just about any time of day or night if your hair "turns back," which means, in case you didn't know, returns to its natural state.

And so I went to Charlene's. Night manager Jerome Shavers regales me with tales of "his nights at Charlene's" which he pronounces in an exaggerated lisp, as if recalling some infamous cabaret or brothel. He always asks new faces what brings them to the salon so late at night. One woman said she just couldn't sleep. Another swore her husband wouldn't let her back in the house unless she got rid of the "Afro beads" on her neck.

Charlene's is empty at 2 a.m. Hours have gone by listening to Jerome. He's talking now about being "called" to do hair and why: to save his Mama and her girlfriend, Miss Orphelia, from being bald-headed. (The two burned each other's scalps regularly with head-over-the-sink perms.) This is where I belong forever, in Charlene's 24 hour hair joint, listening to Jerome's war stories. Bury me under a hair dryer, Jerome can deliver the eulogy: "Here she rests—fried, dyed, and laid to the side."

hair again. Hair issues are among us. We must tease them out, hold them up to the light, and coax them into art.

And thanks once again to modern technology, which brought us no-lye relaxers and such, chemically altering your tresses is now a process somewhat removed from antiquated notions like self-mutilation and disfigurement, and is just as innocent as a five-dollar nail job. Jewish women iron, Asian women perm, WASPs highlight. So what if black women burn and fry? After all, isn't it impossible to tell where society's force-feeding leaves off and we begin? ❑

Good Deeds, Craftily

Yad Lakashish Lifeline for the Old provides Jerusalem's needy elderly and disabled population with a place to spend their days productively and in good company, in craft workshops, for which they receive a small payment. Contributions may be sent directly to *Yad Lakashish, P.O. Box 28, Jerusalem 91000, Israel*, or for tax deductions, $25 or more may be sent though *PEF Israel Funds, Inc., 41 E. 42 St., #607, New York, NY 10017.* Visit the workshops and gift shop at *14 Shivtei Israel St., Jerusalem, (972)2-287-829.*

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Writers

For a forthcoming sourcebook on Jewish Aging send personal reflections, stories, midrashim by May 1. *Susan Berrin, 903 Linden Ave., Victoria, BC, V8V 4G8, Canada. (604)388-5498.*

Art Alert

Print by Harriet Balaran Finck, of Chester, NY. based on the "Where you go, I will go" text from the Book of Ruth.

Jewish visions by women artists. Female artists in New York City's five boroughs, Long Island and Westchester are invited to enter two- dimensional art for a Fall 1995 juried exhibit, held in coordination with LILITH Magazine. Deadline July 13. Send SASE for guidelines. *Jewish Women's Art Exhibit, UJA Federation, 130 E. 59 St., #528, New York, NY 10022. (212)836-1824.*

Tof Miriam—United Women Artists in Israel for Community, Spiritual and Social Awareness encourages and supports women's creativity in Israel. It organizes an annual festival of women in the arts, sponsors year-round per_formances and workshops, produces a newsletter (in English) and serves as an ongoing network for new and established artists. *Tof Miriam, 99a Bayit Vegan St., Jerusalem, Israel. (972)2-411044, or 2-352413.*

For an exhibition of contemporary Judaic art, enter original works that express a Jewish idea or can be used for a Jewish ritual. Submit by July 31 for November showing. Details from *A New View of Judaic Art, JCC of Pittsburgh, P.O. Box 81980, Pittsburgh PA 15217. 412-521-8010.*

For a forthcoming book of traditional and contemporary feminist midrashim on women of the *Tanach*, send your original stories. *Naomi Hyman, 3210 Overlook Circle, Goshen, KY 40026. (502)228-6880.*

Philanthropy

Kanfey Nashim, (wings of women) the Jewish Women's Philanthropy Network, links individuals and groups seeking grants with like- minded funders for projects that advance the agenda of women in the Jewish community. This program of Ma'yan, the Jewish Women's Project of the JCC on the Upper West Side, views philanthropists as donor-activists who can create change. *Ma'yan, JCC, 180 W. 80 St., New York, NY 10024. (212)580-0099. Fax (212)799-0254.*

Support promising research into the historical experience of Jewish women. Legacy—a grassroots effort to nurture and bring the fruits of such research to a broad academic and public audience—will fund scholars working to uncover little known or unexplored sources by Jewish women. Tax deductible contributions can fund a volume ($1000), chapter ($500), page ($250), paragraph ($108), sentence ($54), title ($36), or word ($18). Payable to the Community Foundation of Santa Clara County/Legacy Fund. Mail to *Legacy, 1812 Kirkmont Dr., San Jose, CA 95124. (408)723-8288.*

The Israel Association for Needy Single Parent Families seeks funds to sustain its efforts on behalf of more that 20,000 such families, mostly female-headed households recently immigrated from the Former Soviet Union. *IANSPF, 4 Rav Berlin St., P.O. Box 4478, Jerusalem, 91044 Israel. (972)2-633368. Fax 2-354832.* Funds for IANSPF payable to PEF Israel Funds. *PEF, 41 E. 42 St., #607, New York, NY 10017.*

Purim, Women and Poverty is a program booklet for study and action that links the heroism of Queen Esther with

support for the efforts of low income women to forge change in their communities. *Janet Leuchter, Jewish Fund for Justice, 260 Fifth Ave. #701, New York, NY 10001. (212)213-2113.*

Health

Women Against Violence Against Women Rape Crisis Center in Vancouver seeks suggestions to become more accessible to marginalized groups within the Jewish community such as lesbians, women of color, working class women, and women with disabilities. *Karen M. Hillman, WAVAW/RCC, P.O. Box 88584, Chinatown Postal Outlet, Vancouver, BC, V6A 4A7. Canada. (604)255-5228. Fax (604)255-3579. Crisis Hotline (604)255-6344.*

Chabad's Children of Chernobyl Project has evacuated more than 1000 Jewish children suffering from contamination of radiation released at the 1986 nuclear reactor explosion. With no other options for medical care, they are brought to Israel while their parents plan *aliyah.* Funds to: *Chabad Children of Chernobyl, 15 Park Row, #1515, New York, NY 10038. (212)285-2300.*

Connect

WOMENRAB is a multidenominational international discussion group on issues pertinent to women in the rabbinate. Designed to provide a supportive, accessible sanctuary in cyberspace, it is open only to women rabbis and female rabbinical students. A project of UJA-Federation of New York's Task Force on the Jewish Woman, chaired by Frances Brandt, and of its Subcommittee of Women Rabbis chaired by Rabbi Nina Cardin, the list will be moderated by Ann Plutzer, of the Department on Religious Affairs. To subscribe, write SUB WOMENRAB, your first name, last name in the body of your message to *LISTSERVE@JTSA.EDU*

Project Kesher, sponsor of the 1994 Kiev Jewish women's conference, is bringing a delegation of Western women to a first Leadership Seminar for Jewish Women living in the Former Soviet Union, and organizing a Global Women's Seder on April 2, 1995 in various locations. *Project Kesher, 1134 Judson Ave, Evanston, IL 60202. (708) 332-1994. Fax (708)332-2134.*

A UAHC Privilege Card entitles Jews ages 22-30 to privileges at participating Reform congregations such as discounted or free membership, high holiday tickets, and special programs for young adults. Free. *(800)359-UAHC.*

Education Projects

Grants to Jewish feminist educators are available to promote the integration of feminist perspectives into Jewish elementary and high school education. May 1 is the deadline for the current round of funding. *The Shefa Fund, 7318 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19119. (215)247-9704.*

The Shoah and Antisemitism, twice-yearly institutes, conducted in English, will be held July 3-26, 1995 and December 28, 1995-January 18, 1996. *Ephraim Kaye, Seminars for Educators from Abroad, World Center for Teaching the Holocaust, Yad Vashem, P.O. Box 3477, Jerusalem, Israel. (972)2-751641. Fax (972)2-433511.*

Leisure

Building a Place in the Sun: the Jews of Miami Beach, 1913-1945. The inaugural exhibit of The Sanford L. Ziff Jewish Museum of Florida: Home of MOSAIC, opens April 2 in a restored former synagogue that housed Miami Beach's first congregation. *Jewish Museum of Florida, 301 Washington Ave., Miami Beach, FL 33139-6965. (305)672-5044.*

Sanford L. Ziff Jewish Museum of Florida

The Jewish Cultural Experience offers "Yiddish Women's Voices" July 14-16, and "Mothers, Daughters and Sisters: Jewish Women's Studies" August 6-11, among other summer courses at Circle Lodge. *The Workmen's Circle, Arbeiter Ring, 45 E. 33 St., New York, NY 10016. (212)889-6800 x 272.*

—compiled by Naomi Danis

New Publications

HUES (Hear Us Emerging Sisters), a multicultural magazine for young women promotes the "self-esteem of women of all shapes, sizes, cultures, sexual orientations and economic backgrounds." Published twice yearly by three buddies from college. SASE for writers guidelines. 2 year subscription, $14. Sample, $5. *HUES, P.O.B. 7778, Ann Arbor, MI 48107. (800)HUES-4U2.*

HUES co-editors-in-chief: twin sisters Ophira and Tali Edut (left and right) and Dyann Logwood (center)

IQ, the Issues Quarterly on Women and Girls, provides an overview of social science and public policy research. The premiere issue featured sexual harassment among teens. Annual subscriptions $35 to *National Council for Research on Women, 530 Broadway, 10th fl., New York, NY 10012. (212)274-0730. Fax (212)274-0821.*

Jewish Women's Forum was recently launched to provide a Canadian medium to address women's issues within a Jewish context. One year subcription (6 issues), $19.26. Canadian (includes GST). *JWF, 2-327 Concord Ave., Toronto, Canada M6H 2P7. (416)533-4264. Fax (416)533-6041.*

Hair!

(continued from page 11)

that women could be counted on to grow old, be powerless and remain submissive. *Don't worry,* each new bride's head proclaimed reassuringly: the world is still a safe place for males, men still vanquish women.

"Female sexuality is tolerated, if not encouraged, in traditional patriarchal societies for only that brief and evanescent period immediately prior to marriage," writes Levine. "At this time public display of hair serves as a sexual stimulus and thus as an incentive and inducement for men to marry."

But, she adds, once marriage occurs, female sexuality becomes, indeed, contraindicated—because men fear cuckoldry. (Additionally, once children are born, the generative vitality signified by hair is no longer particularly meaningful.) So female hair is cut off. It follows, in fact, interestingly, that rules concerning hair for married women are more narrow and consistent across cultures than are hair rules relating to any other sub-group.

If ritual is a game," continues Levine, "**hair is the stuff par excellence of game playing, allowing us always 'to have our cake and eat it too.**'" That is, hair is at the same time capable of "painless amputation, infinite manipulation, and endless regeneration." Ritual baldness (shearing brides, for example) allows us to imagine gaining control over time itself, as it mimics the absence of hair at life's margins—babies, bald old men—assuring us that the transition from living to non-living is not so threatening as we fear. "Hair was perceived to be simultaneously both alive and dead," writes Levine. Heads were believed to be, in ancient times, like sexual organs, sites of generation; hair was thought to grow even on corpses. One can understand, then, how cutting a bride's hair becomes both a means of initiating passage and of symbolic redemption from danger.

What we women did, then, when we seduced men into the process of reproduction, was cause them to relinquish their dreams of immortality. Their anger at us for this transforms some of us into Delilahs, Liliths, Medusas, Maenads—our fair female hair, rich and abundant, becoming "untamed" and "wild." Medusa's hair turns into snakes, she becomes a monster.

Finally, though, the buck stops: Hesiod's headless Medusa. Here we have at last "the patriarchal ideal of maternity without sexuality," a headless hole which becomes "the fertile chasm from which progeny spring. In the ideal world of myth," concludes Levine, "the final solution is to remove woman's hair and head altogether."

Covering. Uncovering. Recovering. And so Jews, Greeks and Romans alike covered the heads of brides, slaves and sacrificial animals—symbolically asserting ownership and mastery. Patriarchal culture understandably hesitated to cover males' heads. "Traditional Judaism," writes Levine, only did so "after the Middle Ages, and with a gradualness that betokens instinctive reluctance." As for women's hair over many years' time—slowly the covered hair of married women became "transformed into a sign of women's moral inferiority."

Midrash asks: "Why does a man go forth with an uncovered head, but a woman's head is covered? Answers Rabbi Yehoshua: 'As one who commits a sin is ashamed in public, so a woman (descendant of Eve) goes forth with a covered head.'" Read: Punish any disempowered person for crimes of another in the same sub-group. It all comes out, as it were, in the wash.

"Over time," Levine says, "Men in patriarchal societies have tamed women's hair with relative nonchalance and ease: women are veiled, wigged, blinded, beheaded and fettered . . . the hair of every woman beginning as a sign of crowning glory and ending as a a statement of shame."

"I am afraid," writes Merle Feld in a poem addressed to God, "to call attention to the gifts which you have given me. Afraid that seeing what I cherish, you will take it away. Where," she asks, "did I learn such deep distrust? If I could trust you I could praise you."

"Still," she concludes:

I praise you
with my smile
with my body when I dance
with my voice when I sing
I praise you with my long clean hair. ❑

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THE WAYS WE ARE

RUNNING THE NUMBERS

STATISTICS EVERY JEWISH WOMAN CAN FIND *SOME* USE FOR

COMPILED BY SUSAN WEIDMAN SCHNEIDER

Percentage of women working for 70 U.S. companies who get promoted even when they are working flexible hours ("flex-time" or "mommy track"):

53.3

(But a female consultant hired by New York UJA/Federation to advance the status of women there predicted at a recent meeting that if you take advantage of family leave policies, or a mommy-track schedule in the workplace, "You're on your way to Siberia.")

Number of women who will develop breast cancer:

1 in 8

Percentage of funding for cancer research spent on breast cancer:

5

Percentage of female inheritors of estates worth $5 million or more who make charitable bequests compared to male inheritors:

48:35

(Men who inherit wealth are more likely to invest it in business endeavors.)

Percentage of foundation grants designated to programs that directly benefit women and girls:

less than 5

For every marriage of a Jew to a Jew, number of marriages of a Jew to a gentile:

2

Percentage of children in households where only one parent is Jewish who are being raised as Jews:

25

In interfaith households when both parents are religious, ratio of children raised Jewish by Jewish mothers to children raised Jewish by Jewish fathers:

2:1

Percentage of Jewish women age 30-39 who have college degrees:

63

Percentage of non-Jewish women age 30-39 who have college degrees:

24

Percentage of white, non-Jewish American women who will be single through age 45:

7.5

Percentage of Jewish women who will remain single through age 45:

15

(Are all those years in college having an effect?)

Number of women invited to give the annual State of World Jewry address since its inception in 1981 at New York's flagship JCC, the 92nd Street Y:

1

(Rabbi David Woznica, Director of the Bronfman Center for Jewish Life at the Y says that he looks forward to having another woman give the address in the near future. LILITH's Jewish Women's Talent Bank can suggest some possibilities...)

SOURCES: Catalyst; Centers for Disease Control; National Council for Research on Women; Foundation Center; Council of Jewish Federations